

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Poetry

CHRISTUS NATUS EST

LYRICAL POEMS

BLUE & GRAY

VAISHNAVA LYRICS

ÆSOP IN RHYME

Prose

PAPERS ON SHELLEY, WORDSWORTH & OTHERS

ON READING POETRY (*in preparation*)

RELIGIOUS LYRICS OF BENGAL

# THE CHARACTER OF INDIA

(a reply to *Mother India*)

By J. A. CHAPMAN

SECOND EDITION, REVISED & ENLARGED.

BASIL BLACKWELL  
OXFORD. MCMXXVIII

First Edition, June, 1928.

PRINTED BY N. MUKHERJEE, B. A.,  
AT THE ART PRESS, 31 CENTRAL AVENUE, CALCUTTA  
AND PUBLISHED BY J. A. CHAPMAN, "  
IMPERIAL LIBRARY, CALCUTTA.

DEDICATED TO

GIRISH CHANDRA BOSE

PRAFULLA CHANDRA ROY .

KARUNA KUMAR CHATTERJI

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
I. The Subject and this Book	7
II. Experiences	17
III. Father and Son	28
IV. Grandfather and Grandson	31
V. Mother and Son	35
VI. Husband and Wife	38
VII. Brother-in-law and Sister-in-law	44
VIII. The Men	50
IX. The Women	66
X. The Children	75
XI. Animals	81
XII. Sympathy	86
XIII. Some Indian Stories, I	95
XIV. Some Indian Stories, II	107
XV. Indian Literature, I	114
XVI. Indian Literature, II	122
XVII. The Reading of the Common People	133
XVIII. 'Hinduism is self-condemned'	143

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

PART of the matter of this little book had been published in *The Englishman* of Calcutta and *The Atlantic Monthly*, and I have to thank the editors for the courtesy of their permission to me to use the matter. It is here presented, but re-written. The book is not a disjointed collection of newspaper articles, but, God willing, a thing with a unity.

I had for some time intended to write a book on India, and marvel, now that I have written a little one, and realize as I did not before how fascinating a subject for a book India is, that I did not begin my time in the country with the idea of writing one some day. Then I should have begun collecting material for it from the beginning. I had a good deal of material collected, some in print, some in manuscript, when the publication of Miss Mayo's *Mother India*, and friends telling me that now was the time to get out a book, pushed me into writing one before I was ready, or had quite decided what kind of book to write. It is easy to collect material for books on India, but difficult to find threads to string one's beads on, and to be sure always which beads belong to which threads. Much of the material that I had collected remains unused, because it was decided that in this book an attempt should be made to reveal the character of India to the rest of the world ; that is, how the Indian soul comports itself during the earthly pilgrimage ; and much of my material did not seem relevant to that enquiry. The character of a country is the character of its people, to put it so, when naked. How a man loves and hates, labours and plays, worships, lives and dies, is how the naked man does, not the clothed. The appearance of his country, its forests and fields, belongs to his clothes. He has made his clothes for the body ; he has shaped the face of the land he lives in, or has greatly changed it from its state of virgin forest ; they in turn

concerned with, as Madame Bovary was, but for the loves of Radha and Krishna—for a little of love's bread and wine, and betel nuts, and blue *saris*, and flute playing, and the scent of a body rubbed with camphored sandal paste—for that is there anywhere in the world a more perfect setting?

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

A YOUNG Bengali, Mr. S. K. Bose, just returned after four years study of engineering in England, called on me one day last week, and sought to interest me in an effort to lighten the darkness of England's no-knowledge of India. "That, you know," I said, "is a thing scarcely to be done by even a man of great genius. Such as I am, I am already trying what I can do." I had this little book in mind, and what had been said to me about its chance among books. The first edition of but *one thousand copies being reported to be nearly exhausted*, I wrote to Mr. Basil Blackwell, the publisher, asking if he had any thought of proceeding to a second impression, or a second edition. In his opinion, no mere book on India could hold its own against the "autumn season;" a book on India must inevitably be submerged in the autumn floods. There was still America. Not a few Americans visit India every year; their somewhat foreign-looking clothes and still more foreign-looking hats are a feature of our Cold Weather streets. I have a great liking for Americans, and will break the ice with any American I see anywhere. Those I have talked to, far more now than I could count, have always seemed ready to be interested in any tolerably good book on India. So I was hopeful of the chances of my own book in America. It would appear as if the only Americans who are interested in India are those who visit India; for my publisher had to reply: "I have been working hard trying to place the book in America, but I am not at all hopeful now, after several firms have declined it, that I shall succeed."

There is still India left; and though it must be wrong that a book about India, written for Englishmen and Americans to read, should only be read in India, the book is to be brought out in a second edition. Perhaps by the time that the second and again small edition is exhausted,



should that state of things ever be, the autumn floods will have swept away even the rich argosies of books that they brought with them, and there be a quiet breathing space in which a few pages about India might be read, or will the spring floods pour in as soon as the autumn tide has ebbed? How in such a calamity is Mr. Bose's hope to be fed? It does seem reasonable on his part that there should be the wish, and it might even be an insistence, that England should enter with some eagerness on the path that leads to knowledge of this India that is yoked to her. How little an educated Englishman may know of India, I told Mr. Bose, I knew well; "for," said I, "when I came out to India the first time I knew only that it was a pear-shaped land, where there had been a mutiny, and where Sanskrit was spoken; for I still thought that you all spoke Sanskrit. I had read only one piece of writing dealing with India, apart from stories telling of the Mutiny, and that was a volume of Renan's about Bournouf and other men and matters." I had forgotten the "Jungle Books." I suppose those who come out now-a-days for the first time—do they know a great deal more than I did? Perhaps they do.

J. A. C.

IMPERIAL LIBRARY, CALCUTTA,

*October 1, 1928.*

"Mother India" has been read, has laid down the book, saying: "*That's your India?*" That is what was certain to be said. Every one whose nature it is to feel that he and his look all the brighter for a foreign people's being shown to be dark, has laid down "Mother India," saying "*That's your India*" That is *not* your India, good people: to say that it is, is

". . . a lie, an odious, damned lie ;  
Upon my soul, a lie, a wicked lie !"

To my knowledge, even gentle Englishwomen in India have laid down "Mother India," saying: "*That's your India!*" and strange arguments have been put forward, by themselves or others, to strengthen the belief. One hears such as, "The proof that "Mother India" is true—that is, that it is a faithful picture of India—is that it makes them so angry," and then one of the gentle women will tell me of a scene, in a Simla drawing-room, when an Indian, a word having been said about Miss Mayo's book, spoke in passionate anger. I am asked to accept that as proof; rather, there is never the thought but that I must. What a world of prejudiced contempt of India and the Indians is contained in that. That woman knows well that, were you to say something shameful of me, shameful but true, in public, I would hang my head in silence; but that were you to say something shameful, but false, I should laugh. And if you were to say something odiously shameful, but false, of my mother and sisters, I should be furiously angry; white with rage. She would not say, being a witness of my rage, that it was simulated, or that it was the anger of wickedness, as the anger of one of Dante's fiends. She would know that there could not be any truth in the charge, or I'd have bowed my head in shame. To see the Indian, that particular Indian in the drawing-room (I know the man), as angry when you think he should have been dumb with shame, is to see him as a being too far below me to measure the distance. To think of him so is absurd. He is a particularly fine-souled man. He is

human as I am human ; he will have sinned as I have sinned ; but to think that he is not the same kind—there speaks dark prejudice, heavy, dark, determined prejudice.

A foreigner's book about India, then, must say some impressive word of what is most lovable in the Indian character. Whether Miss Mayo could have said that word about the Indians, whether she could have said it, however good a will she had to say it, must be for others to judge. They must remember that, if you walk through the wards of a hospital, you will quickly be in possession of certain information ; but, if your wish is to ascertain what good there is in those men and women in the beds, you must live with them, and if you are to know all the good that is in the healthier and possibly better men and women outside the hospital, you must live long with them also. My own belief is that Miss Mayo could never have said what is best in the Indian character, never having seen it and so not knowing it. That must be for some other to say. Let me try. When the word has been said, then those whom I convince that what I have seen in Indians is really in them, and not only in my imagination, must judge between her and me. My effort shall be to say that word as clearly as possible. I propose to make no attempt to refute Miss Mayo, taking her up point by point. I think hers was a book to strangle outright, and the only way to do that is to present another picture of India ; one that will lead the more generous to say : "Then that's your India !"

It is a very difficult thing, to try to draw for foreigners a picture of a people that they have never seen ; a people, too, whose language they cannot read ; a people whose literature has been little translated. We have a fair, or even a great, knowledge of the Russian people, even those who have never been in Russia have, but we owe it to the writings of the great Russian artists, Tolstoy, Turgeniev, and the others. Latter-day India has had no such artists. Imagine a Russia without any of her greatest artists, and imagine some Englishman or Frenchman, one with some

knowledge only of the lesser writings of Russia—imagine him trying to piece together all he has learned of Russia from residence there, and intercourse with the people, and from his study of the lesser writings. There would be no great depth of illumination in his picture. Well, I, trying to draw a picture of India, am as that Englishman or Frenchman trying to draw a picture of Russia.

The most hopeful way of proceeding appears to be to gather pictures from books written by Indians about themselves and their lives. I will begin with such pictures. Those I shall give are from books that I have read. The other books, those that I have not read, will contain other such pictures. That should be remembered, and the pictures should be allowed to make their impression. They have made a very deep impression on me. There are pictures drawn from a Life of Govind Ranade, others drawn from an autobiographical work of Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukherji (those you shall read of in the pages that follow), which I shall never be able to forget; and what has deepened them for me is my having lived all these years with just the same faces round about me as look at us out of those books. One can give the pictures: one cannot, unfortunately, give the reinforcement of them that life in India brings. You may read in Mr. Mukherji's book of a holy man. That will make some impression on your mind. But for me the impression was deepened, when one evening, walking along Chowringhee in Calcutta, I came upon two men in *bhairagi* robes, with faces of such a purity of peace, that I caught my breath a little, and when I had gone far enough away for it not to attract their attention, I turned round and stood looking at them. I can tell you about that, but no telling could give anything like the impression that I got in the street.

The same sudden deepening of the impression drawn from the pictures of Indian character in the books was a thing I experienced when, going a march from Mathiana to Theog, in the Simla hills, I passed a *bhairagi* (one in far cleaner robes than one usually sees, which was what

first struck my attention). As he passed me—doubtless I was on his way to some far place of pilgrimage and worship—I stared into the depth of his own unseeing eyes. That was a very sharp experience. I don't think the man was aware of my presence. Another such experience was when a man called at the library, a man unknown to me, giving the name, 'Tridandi Swami Bhakti Hriday Ban. He invited me to come—some one had told him of me—to *math* in the northern part of Calcutta, and he talked to me the *guruji*. I went, of course, and a man with the most ascetic-looking face that I had ever seen, other ascetic faces round about us, talked to me passionately for nearly an hour. As it was a lecture against materialism, and as I am no materialist, when I thought I had listened long enough to show respect to the *guruji*, I said: "But why all this argument, when all that is needed is that we should love each other?" They all agreed that that is all that is needed.

That counted as another deepening of the impression but again, you see, I can only tell you of the experience. I cannot bring it about that you pass through it as I did. Mr. Stanley Jones, the author of "Christ at the Round Table," a book in which the substance is given of what Indians said at their conferences, has this: ". . . a Hindu lawyer arose, took the flowers from the table, walked over and laid them at the feet of one of the group, touched his feet, and said: 'You have found God; you are my *guru*.' All felt that it was not a personal tribute [italics mine] . . ." That time, as many another time, Mr. Jones experienced a deepening of his impression. We can only tell you of these things. You may be impressed, even convinced; but you will never feel what I felt when I read some words in the letter of an American to the "Saturday Review," and what Mr. Jones would have felt, had he read them too—these words: "The world must come to India's help with constructive criticism . . . in order to protect itself from this religious, moral, and physical plague-centre of the world." That is the kind of ultimate of

vindictive exaggeration, one concealing what monstrosity of self-righteous self-praise, that you must expect from men, once you receive a book like "Mother India," and do not strangle it at once, but buy it at the rate, I am told, of three thousand copies a week in New York alone, making yourselves—what? purer or filthier? You must not do such things. If the writing and publication of "Mother India" was justified, it was a book for India to read, to be stung by, ultimately as by fire to be made purer by: it was not a book to be read outside India, or by any Englishman in India, and I may tell you that I have not read "Mother India," and refuse to read it. If you say that I can then know nothing about the book, and ought not to be speaking thus against it, the reply is that I know both my own lower nature and your lower natures too well not to know what kind of a book about India it is that you will buy at the rate of three thousand copies in a week in New York alone. All the best judges, men like Sir Valentine Chirol and Mr. Edward Thompson, both of them authors of books on India, when I ask them what chance there might be of a book of mine on India meeting with a good enough reception at the hands of the public to pay for the printing of it, tell me, with emphasis, that "very few people over here take any keen interest in India," or that "the interest in India is so slight that you cannot exaggerate on the point." So it must have been *that* kind of book that you all fell on. You know the kind. No doubt there are dark things and dreadful done among the three hundred odd millions of Indians, and it is shame to India, but I think it is a nice point whether the West's reading "Mother India," out of the mere prurient itch, is not a greater shame to the West.

If you are to help me to strangle "Mother India," that is, to create the opinion that it ought never to be reprinted, and that the West, to redeem its sin in reading it so greedily, ought to go on a pilgrimage to some place of everlasting snows, as they do in India, your minds must be open to such impressions as things quoted from books of Indians

may be counted on to make, and you must take our word for it that, had you lived among the Indians, not a life of dull *incuria*, you would have experienced many deepenings of those impressions. One of my letters is from a man, a railway engineer, who after only a few years in India left it for other and very different work in England. His word is: "Affection for her people is, I think, bred by India, even in those who, like myself, return rather than 'stay.'" Affection is not bred by a people whose society is the "religious, moral, and physical plague centre of the world."

It is like enough that readers of this book in England and America may ask people that they meet, men or women returned from India, what they think of it. So I will ask you to note, as you read the later chapters of the book, how very different an impression of India I should now have to give, if my life, instead of bringing me to some extent into close contact with Indians, had been the life of, say, a banker or a merchant; if I had dealt with the shirts that Indians wear on their backs, and not with the books that they come to the library to read. Note also, please, how different my impression would have been, had I been a man of a very different temper; had I been as full of race-prejudice as men for the most part are. Many men returned from India may say that my book errs as much on one side as "Mother India" errs on the other. They will not have seen all that I have seen, partly because they had not all my opportunities (many men, as I say in another part, have had far better opportunities than mine), partly because they had not my good-will, and over and above that they will be like Mrs. Clairmont, whom some one has described as "a . . . person . . . with that third-rate cleverness which effectually prevents its possessor from even guessing that there is anything beyond what it immediately discovers in a person." That third-rate cleverness is a terribly common thing. It would prevent any one learning much of India.

Others will have been more stiff-necked. A young Cambridge man,\* who I thought would be interested in the book, and so I wrote and told him that it had been published, replied that, after reading 'the very damaging' review in the "Civil and Military Gazette," he could neither conscientiously buy the book or recommend any one else to buy it. What will that man be likely to learn of India? if he begins with a prejudice on any point, how soon is he likely to shed it?

Others will have told themselves what is not the truth about my book and myself, as one who wrote to me: "Vous n'avez vraiment connu qu'une certaine classe de Bangalais; si vous connaissiez la vie réelle du peuple indien, vous seriez horrifié . . ." Also: "Ce qui importe, après tout, c'est la masse. C'est elle qui fait la nation, et non pas la poignée de types éduqués et plus ou moins hybrides, quand il s'agit d'un peuple assujéti. On peut idéaliser tout, le poétiser, pour un but littéraire; mais quand il s'agit de la vie réelle d'un peuple, il ne faut plus se payer de mots et simplement rejeter de côté ce qui générerait l'enthousiasme . . . Et puis votre livre est insuffisant, parce que trop personnel, parce que vous vous remuez dans un cercle trop restreint; en un mot vous êtes trop partial."

The writer of those words, a woman, knows as well as she knows how many fingers there are on her hands, that I have spent by far the greater part of my time in India amongst bank and library clerks, and young college students, almost all of them from poor homes; that I have had my experience of servants in houses and menials in offices; that I have not been unconcerned with carters, dandy and rickshaw coolies, and the cultivators that a man's time in camp gives him a chance of watching. No doubt it is from the talk of men who have been abroad to

---

\* I dreamt that that young Cambridge man had not read Boswell's "Life of Johnson," and on my asking him afterwards if that was so, he told me it was. I wonder at the University of Cambridge not seeing the indecency of giving any Englishman a degree who has not read that book, and I think some one ought to speak to the University about it. Who will?



be educated, men such as some of those described in detail in later chapters, that I have learned most of what I have learned from talk; but such knowledge would weigh lighter, if such things could be weighed, than what the mere presence of men has taught me through the pores of my skin. There is a very sure limit to what the restless, analysing intellect ever learns: the thing that God has endowed with power to learn much is the whole nervous system—in silence. You look into their faces, and you feel them there, and slowly the absorbing mind adds a little to a little. It was not from talk with intellectual men that Lafcadio Hearn learned what he finally knew of the Japanese. She knows all that generally, does my correspondent; but, because she has her own ideas of how society should live and move, and because Indian society does not so live and move, but lives and moves differently, she will shut the door on her own knowledge. A man with his intelligence not so obscured, a reviewer of my book in "United India and Indian States," wrote: ". . . his impressions have been formed from intimate relationship with or keen observation of people of all grades of society and every walk of life." When two persons say things so different about the same book, one of them has said what is not true.

There is singularly little to quote about the character of India from earlier books on India by Englishmen. You will find things in plenty such as Miss Eden's ". . . it is the most picturesque population, with the ugliest scenery, that ever was put together," but that says nothing of character. Even Kipling's "Kim," wonderful as are the glimpses of Indian scenery given in it—he did not see it as the ugliest—there is no word of the people that is not merely from the teeth outwards. I agree entirely with an Indian, who, writing in the "Nation and Athenæum," had: "Even Kipling, with his long experience of India, failed to reach the soul within. "Kim" is like a curio shop, plus all the entertaining, enchanting, and persuading falsehoods of the curio-dealer himself. He showed his

readers the "Wheel of Life" going round and round, and sought to mesmerize them by its mystic revolutions. The throb of real life escaped his touch."

There is, then, no help for us in the earlier books on India by Englishmen. So, having given some pictures of Indian life drawn from the writings of Indians themselves, I pass to impressions of those Indians whom I have known myself, adding some more in this edition to those given in the first edition. It will all be in vain, I fear, except with the candid and the generous. But what it may be for the others is their concern.

The task, in the words of that Indian whom I have just quoted, is "to reach the soul within." However well the writer of any book that did that had done his part, there would be a part for the reader to do.

Before I give the pictures drawn from writings of Indians about themselves, I will speak of sundry small experiences of my own, my hope being that with such a preparation you may be better able to receive the impressions that the pictures drawn from the Indian books ought to give.

## II

### EXPERIENCES

ONCE more a train journey ; for I was to go to Patna for the Durga and Lakshmi *pujas*. I had two travelling companions, the elder a man with whose face I had grown familiar from seeing it at garden parties and elsewhere, but to whom I had never spoken. A face with something *rishi*-like in its smile ; so that I had felt strongly drawn to the man. The younger man was the other's son. I spoke to the two, of course. The elder remarked that I had come very early to the station, 'contrary to the habit of Europeans.' He was right in saying that I had come very early to the station. I suppose, too, that he was right in thinking that what I had done was contrary to the habit of Europeans. I meant to talk to him in a way that should again be a thing contrary to the habit of Europeans ; I meant to do that, whether he should be aware of it or not. I had come to the station, partly for the interest of watching the crowd, and partly to talk to whatever Indian fellow-passengers I might have.

To a man with a *rishi*-like smile one would talk of religion, which moreover is the thing to talk to any Indian travelling companion about. Ever since I learnt that, I have made a point of having with me on a railway journey a little book, in the production of which I had some part myself. It is called *Vaishnava Lyrics*, and is made of forty-eight verse translations or paraphrases of old Bengali religious lyrics. I take a copy of that book with me, when travelling. If I have an interesting-looking Indian as a travelling companion, presently I ask him if he has a book with him. He always has, and it is always a religious book. I ask him if he will let me look at it, and I give him my *Vaishnava Lyrics* to look at. Once I so exchanged

books with a Sikh in a most wonderfully clean-washed turban, a thing purer than snow. Almost immediately afterwards I joined an Englishman next door for tea. When I returned to my carriage, the Sikh told me that he had read every word of my book. I had not been quite prepared for that. That is not the point I would make, however, but this: that that Sikh was by that time ready to talk to me, forgetting that I was a foreigner and a stranger. As it happened (the man's occupation was that of timber merchant), we did not go very deep into anything. I had had a long spell of work in Calcutta, and this was to be my rest and holiday. I was not ready for any immediate deep discussion. We accordingly talked of light things, but not so light but that the unusual openness of the man impressed me greatly. One of the subjects of our talk was the work of Mr. Puran Singh, his books. I was the first to mention him and them. Mr. Puran Singh was his cousin, my companion then told me.

So to the man with the *rishi*-like smile one would talk religion. I opened the conversation by telling him that I was going to Patna; or he asked me where I was going, and I told him. 'Then we shall travel together as far as Bakhtiarpur,' he said. He was to change there for Rajgir, but that would not be until early the next morning. Rajgir, with Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, and Sarnath, is a place famous in the Buddhist annals. One of its stories is that, while the Lord Buddha was sitting in meditation in a cave on the hillside, the devil in a horrible shape came and frightened Ananda, his well-loved companion. Which the Buddha perceiving, he stretched out his arm, the rock of the cave cleaving to give it passage, and patted Ananda on the shoulder.

Rajgir is a place we visit, and I was glad to think this Bengali was going there. Still I said to him, 'To leave Bengal and go to Rajgir is not a very orthodox way of celebrating the Durga and Lakhshmi *pujas*.' His smile sweetened still more thereat, and, laying his hand on his heart, he said, 'There is *pūja* there, and there is *pūja* at

Rajgir.' It was not for me to deny that. I knew that there was *pūja* in his heart.

Upon the starting of our train, by which time it was dark, I was invited to partake of a simple Bengali dinner, a thing I gladly did, not for the satisfaction of hunger, for I never dine, but as a mark of friendship towards those men with *pūja* in their hearts. The meal consisted of *chupatties*, curried *alu* (that is, potato), and *sandesh*, the famous white sweetmeat. So we dined on wheat, potato, and sugar. When two Englishmen, father and son, or be it but two friends, eat a meal in a train, they sit together in a corner. Not so two Indians. Father and son, that time, sat almost as far apart as they could get, and as far, too, from me. Not from unsociableness, for the Indians are a highly sociable people, but from a feeling, as I understand, that with every meal there is bound up something of sacrament. I had thoughts of that while I ate. It came over me also, and as a proof of the way India has drawn me closer to her, for all these years of residence, that what would have been ten years before my greater or smaller embarrassment, when asked to eat unfamiliar food, and do it with my fingers too, was wholly absent. I had my share of that Indian dinner, as if nightly I sat down to an Indian dinner. Well, water will wear away the hardest stone ; water, the softest thing.

After dinner we soon made ready to turn in. My companions wrapped themselves in Malida *chaddars*, those almost incredibly soft, warm things that they make in Kashmir. The Rampur *chaddar* is also famous. Some talk there was first about the word, whether it is *châdar* or *chaddar*. In Bengal, I was told, they make it *châdar* ; in Bihar, whither we were bound, *chaddar*.

The running of the train is so timed, that one wakes at Mokameh Ghat for one's first sight of the Ganges. A great and beautiful river. All great sheets of moving water are beautiful ; but in India, where the rivers are so huge, and flow so for the most part through alluvial plains, which means constant changes of river-bed, one gets, besides the

impression of the beauty of running water, such a sense of its terrible destructiveness as Englishmen live and die without. At any moment the Ganges or Teesta or Sone may revert to a long-abandoned bed, a bed that generations of men have tilled; and destroy homes and crops and cattle. An Indian river is Destroyer as well as Purifier and Fructifier. The Sone, which used to join the Ganges below Patna, now flows in miles above that city. One day there will be a flood, and the chafing river will remember its old channel, and pound away at the weak bank until it finds it. Then it will destroy, and stay not its hand until all is destroyed. Then the waters will shrink in the new-old bed until they appear as harmless as a lamb.

My companions were awake with me at Mokameh Ghat to see the river. Bakhtiarpur, where they were to leave me, was but a stop or two farther on; but there was time enough to note how the holiday spirit had deepened in them during the night. Very pleasant are the courtesies of men to each other, during the few hours that they are brought together. The elder man was more than courteous to me. 'Give up going where you are thinking of going,' he said, 'and come with me to Rajgir;' and I very nearly did.

That man with the *rishi*-like smile had a nature that corresponded with it. I knew infallibly (in this grave matter, where neither I nor mine are concerned, but those only whose salt I have these many years eaten, I am not going to suffer myself to be restricted by any conventional feeling whatever; neither by what convention requires of a man's modesty, or anything of the kind) I knew infallibly, I say, and instantly, that his was a beautiful soul. That he has committed a blacker sin than any of mine might be proved to me a hundred times over. I should say that it could not matter: God could by no possibility be angry with a man with so beautiful a soul. I am ready to trust that man to the world's end of purity.

Is he singular? Are there hardly any others like him in India? I cannot think so. His, I believe, to be a fairly

common kind of Indian soul. With the possession of that beauty may go many weaknesses, incapacities, and so on, but there remains that something that Jesus or St. Francis would have loved. I think they would often have found it in India. It was the first thing I thought I had found myself, when I first came to India, which was in 1900. What I saw I tried to express in these words, addressed to an Indian boy. No particular boy: I had no one in my mind.

And yet thou speakest mutely, and with a spell  
Of lustrous eyes, and upturned, eager glance,  
And smile that never lightly came to grace  
An earthly countenance.  
I read that character upon thy face,  
And follow all God's ways, the many and wise,  
Wherein He fashioned thee, a flower of youth,  
Marked with the truth of antique, honoured race,  
Out of old souls uncount.

That was the first impression that I got.

I am going to tell some stories, my purpose being to make you believe that the man with the *rishi*-like smile is not singular. The first shall be of a boy.

I was at the railway station at Bankura, waiting for my train to come in. Dr. Edward Thompson, the author of *An Indian Day*, and Mrs Thompson were with me. We were seated on a bench, and were talking of Euripides, Wordsworth, and the high themes associated with those names, when I noticed that, in the soft Indian twilight, our group was being intently watched by a boy, a holy man's *chela*. I began to watch him as intently. The talk went on; there had been floods, and all the trains were running late. 'He knows,' I soon said to myself, 'that we are talking of holy things.' I meant that the boy did. I am sure he did. Not that he understood a single word that was spoken, nor recognized 'Euripides' and 'Wordsworth' as men's names. He knew because he was of a refined and sensitive soul. 'We are all brothers, with God amongst us: thou art, and these are, and I am.' I wanted to go to him, and stand before him, and say that. Instead I wrote

it in a poem, as soon as I had got into my carriage, and the train had left the station. I was greatly moved.

Years later I was in a carriage in a train on the Kalka-Simla railway, in a carriage with a permanent way inspector, a rough-looking Muhammadan. I had not been long alone with him, when he asked me a question about the human soul, and my belief regarding it. That led to a talk about religion that lasted some time. Then he asked me to what extent men were educable. Were the differences that he had noticed in men due to this one's having been better educated than this other one, and so on, or did they depend on the original endowment? I answered that question at my ease, being interested. I gave the man an outline of the career of two Englishmen, Lord Balfour and my own brother, explaining that, even were you to give a man with common gifts at birth an education from all the ends of the world of education, you would not make a man to compare in anything with those two. We came to the station at which the man was to alight. He salamed to me before leaving, he did it with both hands, bowing reverently, and my recognition of his spirit rushed through me, so that it made me dumb. After a little I said to myself quietly: 'He salamed to me as to God.'

I was once bicycling in Calcutta, and was meditating in my mind on the words, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' At a point I passed three grimy coolies, waiting before crossing the road until I should have passed. One of them said: 'Salam, sahib.' Again I had a rush of feeling, under the influence of which I said aloud (you may think it was silly): 'He knew what I was thinking of: he must have done.' Of all the coolies that I had ever passed in the street that man was the only one to speak to me, and not one has spoken since.

One more story. Years ago the Teshi-Lama from Tibet paid India a visit, and went to Bodh Gaya and other places sacred to the Buddhists. The old temple at Bodh Gaya, one of the holiest of things to Buddhists, had passed under



the control of a Hindu *mohant*. There had been trouble between him and his following and certain Buddhist pilgrims, and in retaliation for something that the pilgrims had done, the *mohant* had taken action in a direction grievous to Buddhists. The Tesbi Lama urged upon Captain O'Connor, an officer whom the Indian Government had attached to the Tesbi Lama for the duration of his travels in India, that action should be taken to redress matters. Captain O'Connor formed a society to deal with the matter, and I was invited by MM. Satischandra Vidyabushan to join it and be its treasurer. I agreed to do that, and was summoned to a meeting. Captain O'Connor laid before us what he proposed should be addressed to the *mohant* in the name of the Buddhists of the world. To my mind, it seemed likely that the Buddhists would feel that the new situation was as grievous as the old, and I spoke in that sense, and so pressed it, that we separated without a decision; and we never met again. Not long after a card was handed to me one morning. It bore Satischandra Vidyabushan's name, and stated that he was accompanied by a Buddhist priest from Chittagong. Might they see me? They came, and we sat down, and I waited to hear what had brought them. The priest looked at me, but did not speak. I made a remark or two, but about nothing very important, to Satischandra, and then again there was a little silence. I broke it by saying that I meant to visit Bodh Gaya soon, when I was told that I should be given a letter of introduction to the Keeper of the Buddhist Rest House. Then we fell silent once more. I did not like to ask what they had come for. The two men rose to their feet, and Satischandra motioned to me to rise too, saying that the priest wished to pronounce a blessing. He did—in sonorous Sanskrit. The two men then noiselessly left the room, leaving me standing where I was standing. When common day returned, I said aloud something like: 'So—he had come for that.' I told that story once to a doctor in Harley Street. 'You told that story so well,' he said, when I had finished, 'that it almost brought the

tears to my eyes.' 'I know it did,' I replied: 'it almost brought the tears to mine.'

The impression may now have been given that I am a sentimental man, all whose geese are swans. Not so. I once called on two ladies, just arrived in Calcutta, to deliver some message. I was with them only two or three minutes. I found them examining the *chits* of a man, a cook. They were to engage one. 'Take my advice,' I said, after a look at the man's face, 'and get some one else.' When I next saw them, they told me that they had not taken my advice, but wished they had; for they had engaged the man, and had given him ten rupees, and had sent him to the market to buy the bazar, as we say in India. That was the last they saw of him. 'How did you know that he was not trustworthy?' 'There was rogue written in every line of his sharp-nosed face,' I said.

When, in 1907, I was doing duty for a time at the Calcutta Madrasah, whose Principal was on leave, I saw that it was desirable that I should have a long hour with a leading Muhammadan of Calcutta, and discuss things with him. So I asked him to come and dine with me, he and I alone. That dinner, and it was the only dinner that ever did, gave me a violent headache, and what caused the headache was the effort I had to make to damp down and control my detestation of the man's character. A most unlovely man.

So, not being a man all whose geese are swans, I have perceived that loveliness of character in Indians, and yet my ways in India have not been such as to bring me near the heart of the people. I came out in the service of one of the Exchange Banks. Then I became a teacher, lecturing on banking and such like things. Then I was appointed librarian. I have always had to work hard, and partly at least over things in which Indians are not interested. I have had to work hard, to the shutting out of any long study of Indian languages, so that I have not moved among Indians, working with them, and talking their language easily. Those men among Englishmen in India who do

both, district officers, missionaries, and others, have been far, far more in the way of appealing to Indians than I have ever been, and could doubtless tell many more stories than I can of the quality in Indians that gave my companion of that railway journey his *rishi*-like smile. Or if this or that man could not, it is because he has not my literary man's interest in things, and has forgotten.

Like other men whose avocation has been pure literature as distinguished from such things as history or philosophy, I have been too concerned with my own people to have much mind for others. I have lived in India, regardless during long stretches of time of both the country and its people. If a man is to do anything in literature, especially if he has a day's work to do besides, he must give his whole mind to it. He must live to that one end. If Indians could have helped me in my work, I would have cultivated their friendship. How could they help me? All I can say, then, is that I know the country well enough to be sure that the soul of it is fundamentally pure. If I have no more proof to bring forward than I have, that is accounted for.

The thing may, moreover, be said to prove itself. If Indian civilization was not fundamentally pure, seeing that it is so old, it would be notoriously rotten, an open and exposed sore. English civilization is to-day manifestly an inferior thing to the civilization of older days. It is manifestly the Silver Age. The signs of it are on the surface. They stare at one out of every issue of an English daily paper. It is always so: what a civilization is the mere surface shows. If so old a civilization as the Indian (they all decline) had not '*salt enough to keep it sweet*,' then the signs of it would be visible everywhere. There would be no need for any one to draw the facts from police court reports and hospital records. The signs would lie on the surface. So, if, taking a journey from Calcutta to Rawalpindi, and looking much out of the window, you get the impression of a race of industrious small cultivators with whatever vices they may have, however wrong some of

their social habits may be, live lives that have a core of soundness, you may trust that impression. That is the impression that you will get. Undoubtedly it is. 'If child-marriage prevails among this people,' you might say, looking out on the wheat fields of the Punjab, and noting the physical well-being of the men working in them, 'then the evil effects of it have been exaggerated.' There may have been far more child mothers like Pompilia in India than in Italy, is another thought you might have: if so, most of their children must have begun life with as good a promise as Pompilia's boy did.

On this point of the effect on the race of the immaturity of the mothers at the time they give birth to their children—on that point and on allied points, I have consulted Dr. C. A. Bentley, the Director of Public Health in Bengal, and a man who has mixed with Indians very much more freely than is common for an Englishman to do; a man in whose house you will oftener than not, of an evening, find an Indian caller. He speaks as much more than a professional man.

A point that Dr. Bentley would make is that the conditions for all the races of India are not equal, nor would, be, if the child-mother was the rule everywhere; but that there are other and more important factors. He might say: "You yourself have noticed something important, though you may not have been fully aware that you have. You say, 'Take a railway journey from Calcutta to Rawalpindi' that is, *through the United Provinces and the Punjab*, where the food of the people is not the same as in Bengal, and where there is far less malaria: you do not say, 'Take a railway journey from Calcutta to Dacca'—that is, *through Bengal*."

The Bengalis, at least those of Western Bengal, are a weaker race physically—Dr. Bentley sees an effect of this in their intellectual life already—than their ancestors, and than the people of the United Provinces and the Punjab. The factors against them are:—

(1) the climate;

(2) the immaturity of the mothers, and other bad conditions at birth; but these are rather factors accounting for the heavy *infantile mortality* than for the stamina of those who survive the conditions, and grow to manhood or womanhood;

(3) the great increase of malaria in Central Bengal, a thing Dr. Bentley maintains, and here he is supported by Sir William Willcocks, the irrigation engineer, that one can accurately date. Malaria began to be a serious menace to the health of the people only after the railway embankments had been built, and why the embankments should have brought down that calamity, was their being built so as to cut right across the natural drainage of the country. Some one should look into that.

(4) the little nourishment that there is in their food. Dr. Bentley says the Bengalis are trying to exist on "*devitalised rice*," which cannot be done: they are feeding themselves with what was never the living part of rice, which is the germ, that, when the rice is mill-husked, is thrown away with the bran. They do not get that to eat, but only the rest of the grain, that is, rice-food, which was never living, and, if the milled rice is old, is now still more dead. Transplant a Bengali family to the United Provinces or the Punjab, and, though the mothers be but the children they were before, in two or three generations there will be a marked improvement in physique. That shows that the food and climate factors count for far more than any question of the maturity or immaturity of mothers.

One will often be told that the drive behind the social practice of child-marriage is something of character, a cowardice. The people themselves say that its root is economic. For economies' sake they have adopted the joint family system. When the sons marry, they bring their brides to the paternal house. They all live together, father, mother, sons, daughters-in-law, children. If there is to be peace in their homes, they say, the brides must come when they are still children. I am not concerned, however, with this matter except so far as it throws light upon the character of India, and, as I think that for even the most searching enquirer not much light would be thrown on that even at the bottom of the matter, I will leave it to some other to probe.

Now for the pictures from those Indians' books.

man, who had married a widow. This made Ranade's father sullenly resentful. He absented himself from the house all that evening, and made arrangements to depart to his home in Kolhapur the next morning. This Ranade's sister told Ranade, and he knowing his father's character, was much distressed, and could not sleep that night. He rose early the next morning, and went and stood on the verandah of his father's room. His father paid no attention, and about an hour passed in silence. At last the old man told Ranade to sit down, but Ranade still stood. After some time the father again said that he should sit down. This time Ranade spoke, saying, 'If you give up your intention of going to Karvir, then I will sit down. If you and all the folk go to Karvir, what is the good of my staying here? I will go with you.' The old man remained obstinately silent.

Nine o'clock struck, and still the tension continued. Then a servant came to say that the carriages were waiting. This made Ranade realize that the intention to depart was fixed and final; so, declaring that he had been orphaned on the day his mother died, he left the room. A little later he sent a servant to his father with a note that said, 'If you will not abandon your intention of going to Kolhapur, I will send the Government my resignation.' He would have done so. His father yielded.

To return to the time when Ranade's wife died. His father, having that dread in him of which I have spoken, took the extreme step of intercepting part of his son's correspondence, especially the letters of his friends in Bombay, who, the old man knew, would be urging marriage with a widow on his son. Also he immediately took steps to find a bride for his son; he took those steps without his son's knowledge, and they were steps that he meant should so commit Ranade, that he would not be able to refuse to marry. A gentleman of good family had come at that very time to arrange for the marriage of his daughter, a girl of eleven, named Ramabhai. Madhavrao, the girl's father, and Ranade's father were acquaintances. They met, and a

marriage was proposed between Ranade and Ramabhai. If the girl was found suitable, then the marriage should be celebrated. Ranade's father sent an old and trusted family dependant to the place where the girl lived. He was to interview her, and to examine delicately into the affairs of her family.

This old and trusted dependant reported that he approved, and then the more committing step was taken. The girl was brought to visit the Ranade family. The two fathers had agreed that, if Ranade showed any sign of unwillingness to accept the marriage, Ramabhai's father should urge that his refusal would involve the girl's ruin ; for, since she had been committed so far, she was not one who could be bestowed in marriage on another. Ranade did show sign ; he insisted that he desired not to marry again, and he begged his father to remember that he was no longer a child, but a grown man of thirty-one years, and one who ought not to be coerced. He offered to pledge his word not to marry a widow. His father was adamant against both argument and appeal ; so that Ranade saw that the alternative was acceptance or an open breach. Finally he submitted, saying, 'Alas, that you will not listen to me, yet it is my duty to do what you say.' He meant that, as a father's orders are binding on a son, his own father should consider better what he ordered.

I shall have a note to give on the subject of the married life of Ranade and Ramabhai, but later, for at the moment I have another thing to deal with. That picture of the grown man standing for a whole hour silent on the verandah of his father's room, and he would have stood there all day, is one not to forget. I have it, with what else about Ranade is given here, from James Kellock's *Mahadev Govind Ranade: Patriot and Social Servant*, a book the whole of which is worth reading.

## IV

### GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON

**A**N old Indian gentleman, whose memory was failing him, took, to exercise it, to teaching his grandson poetry. So at least he said, but one thinks that, if there had not been that reason to give why he should teach his grandson poetry, he would have found another just as good. Now at school they had given the boy a book to study, called geography, and there had been no end of talk about places. One day the little boy read about Calcutta, near which his home was. He showed the geography book to his grandfather, and said to him, 'We are reading about our own city ;' and then the boy gave the old man a list of Calcutta's imports and exports. 'But that is not geography,' said the grandfather. 'I have it in an ancient book, and I will show it you.' Then he went, and returned with the *Meghaduta* or *Cloud Messenger* of Kalidas. He translated to the boy the following tale from the Sanskrit :

A Titan was employed in the Himalayas by God to look after the treasury, but he defaulted, and was exiled for a whole year at the southern point of India. Being homesick, he wanted to send a message to his wife, but there was no messenger. Suddenly he saw the July cloud rising from the Indian Ocean. 'I'll send a message by this cloud.'

So he said :

'In the first flush of July the cloud rises; as the elephant charges the mountains with its tusks, so the cloud charges the sky with its tusks of lightning. O you born of the sun of the gods! O sun of the wandering heavens, take this message to my wife, and, as you go, I will tell you how to reach my home '

Then he gave his directions :

'When you come to the blue mountains, you feel the breeze becoming different. The wind caresses you. The white cranes make eye-pleasing circles before you. Peacocks stand on



branches of the trees, their fans out-spread, dancing to the drumming of thunder. At last you reach the Himalayas. And you will see where the rainbow bends its glory to make an entrance for the gods. You will find a woman there whose bracelets are too big for her wrists, because she has grown thin, longing for me. She is my wife'

'That,' the boy's grandfather then said, 'is geography, not imports and exports.'

If we lived in that grandfather's mind-world, there would be many surprises for us, but I think they would most of them be good ones. He must have been familiar with Moradali, that court-musician of the Mughal emperor, whose absence when his master lay dying, and wanted Moradali to sing to him, caused him the wild grief expressed in a well-known song :

O King, for you I go from door to door.  
 Song's mendicant, me desolation sore  
 Greets as a shadow on either hand Oh, gone  
 The glories, and the palace floors upon  
 Animals prowl. But who can take away  
 The wild, wild beasts that on my lone heart prey?

The grandfather must have known the musician well, for Moradali taught his son music for many years ; his son, the father of the grandson. Moradali taught him and another man, a rich man. He said a thing one day to the rich man that would have had no surprise in it for the grandfather, but would have surprised us ; he said, 'I cannot give you any more instruction.' 'Why not?' asked the rich man ; 'you are teaching Mukerji so much.'

'You see,' replied Moradali, 'Mukerji is a poor man. I have given you the training of a critic, so that, when good musicians come, you will know enough to support them, and they will be able to remain good musicians ; but Mukerji will have to make his living by music, while you only criticize it.' One doubts if that was any more Moradali's real reason, though in itself a good one, than the wish to exercise his memory was the grandfather's real reason for teaching his grandson poetry. One's intuition

is, that of the two pupils the poor man was the purer-souled. Not only because he was poor, but because it was he and not the rich pupil who had a father who thought the *Meghaduta* was geography, and not tables of imports and exports, and because it was he who had the little boy for son. To the purer-souled, as all the world should know, one can teach more music.

The father had not always been poor. He was poor at the time Moradali spoke, because of a failure in health that had forced him to lay aside his law business. He recovered his health, and was able to resume his practice. From that day onwards, while he loved to sing, and spent the vacations going from countryhouse to countryhouse singing, he refused always to accept money.

The grandson was Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, and it was from his own book, *Caste and Outcaste*, an extremely good book, that I made my notes. This is a passage in the book:

All India knows the six o'clock melody. The world rises to it, and all the morning music that is made is based upon it. It cannot be altered. The evening melody is called the 'Tiger Beauty.' I have heard Moradali sing it. He would stretch his lips, narrowing them in the corners so that they took the sinister form of a tiger's mouth giving the hunger cry. At ten o'clock in the evening he would sing his Remorse Song, always, when he was with us. And though we children used to make fun of him sometimes, we all worshipped this man.

Once I said to Moradali, 'Grandfather, tell me; why music?' He replied: 'When the Lord made the universe He made men righteous, but they did not remain so. He gave them sculpture to reclaim them, but they played with it for only a few hours. Then he said: 'I will give them the power of melody; through it they will come back to Me.' So He sang out the sun, and rolled out the thunder melody. (But this tune has been lost for two thousand years.) Thus music was created to bring men back to God.'

I said, 'Did you go back to God in this way?' He shook his head and would say no more.

Note what is said there of the six o'clock melody; that all the morning music that is made is based upon it; that it cannot be altered. Who is to judge how right or wrong

a thing it is, that in India so many things cannot be altered?

Here is another passage:

I asked my father once, 'Why music?' He answered: 'I don't know, but I think this. Once on a time there were nine stars, and one of them was attracted by the life of the world, and fell away to come to earth. No one knows what happened, but it lost itself in everything that lives. From time to time it cries out to the other eight stars. That is music.'

## V

## MOTHER AND SON

MY notes are still from *Castle and Outcaste*. Our house was situated at the edge of the forest, not far from the town. In the evenings, after the lights were out, we used to sit by the open window looking towards the forest. I remember one evening especially; though I must have been a very little child at the time. I was gazing into the darkness outside when I saw something that appeared to me like a huge jewelled hand. This hand, with rings gleaming on all its fingers, was slowly coming towards me out of the jungle. The movement of the hand in the darkness was intense and terrifying. I cried with fright, and my mother, putting her arms about me, said: 'Fear not, little son. Those are only the eyes of the foxes and jackals and hundreds of other small jungle-dwellers coming and going about their business.' I was overawed by the fierce power of life, and I watched in silence the tremendous black masses of dark trees with the emptiness gleaming all around them, and the innumerable fireflies flitting about. My grandfather, who was fond of quoting poetry, said: 'The earth is mocking the stars by throwing out her illumination,' and at last, soothed and quieted, I was put to bed.

We lived in the outskirts of a town near Calcutta, my grandfather, father, mother, and my brothers and sisters and I. As we were Brahmans, we had charge of the village temple which had been in the family for generations. . . . I remember every hour of our ritual, and there is a ritual for every hour of the day in India; the ritual peculiar to Brahman households like ours, and the ritual of the peasant and the workman. The members of my family, the townspeople, the labourers in the field, the many beggars—each followed an intricate and age-old pattern of life, from sudden sunrise, through fervid noon, to the heavy fall of night and silence.

In our household, my mother was the first one to rise in the mornings. She got up about five, and would always sit and meditate for half-an-hour so as not to disturb the morning silence. In India a woman is a goddess and must be ready at all times to be worshipped. When we children were up, we would go to her and bow before her and remove the dust from her feet. Every morning I would salute my mother and my father. To my mother I said, 'You are my God, my way to

God,' and to my father, 'You are the Way, and the End. O my father, teach me to find the Way.

My mother was a very simple woman. She did not know how to read and write. This will seem strange to western readers, but it is in accordance with the traditional education of a lady in India, and my mother being of the old school considered that anyone who could count beyond a hundred was too forward to be a lady. She used to say: 'Don't you think an understanding heart knows, if not more, at least all that is in the printed page? The heart is the king who knows all things and has all things. The head is only the palace. If your prince be dead, what good is the empty palace?'

My mother was a busy woman, for in India it is the mother who takes entire charge of the children and their education until they are ten or twelve years old. There were eight of us, and a large household to run, and my mother never spent less than three hours a day in prayer and meditation. Yet her life and personality were so quiet, her duties were conducted so softly and with so much gentleness, that as I look back it seems to me as though it must have been tranquility and not energy that was the motive power in our house.

My mother could cook and did so, for cooking is a sacramental art and a part of the day's religious ritual. At midday she would meditate, and no one was allowed to disturb her, but in the afternoon she would recite to us from memory parts of the epics, the old religious tales of India. She had been taught by her mother, and her mother had been taught by her mother, and so back for generations. We would listen for about half-an-hour at a time and then repeat what we had heard. Sometimes she would have two of us chant the lines, sometimes one at a time. . . .

All through my childhood and even after I had grown up and had been away on a pilgrimage, my mother would come to me when I was in bed for the night, and sit beside me and ask me about everything that had happened to me during the day. Then she would say, 'Now it is time to go to sleep. Have you enjoyed anything especially in the day's experience, my son?' When I would answer, 'Yes,' she would reply, 'Well, that was God's presence which you felt.' With those words she would leave me for the night. . . .

She had a strange healing power, and when we were sick, she would put her hand on our foreheads and say gently, 'It is not. It is not. It is not.' When we went to bed restless or feverish, how well I remember her coming to us and telling us to say those words to ourselves, over and over again, until, soothed and peaceful, we would fall asleep. In a day, or some-

times two, we would be well. People used to bring their children to her, and she would tell them to say the words for themselves, 'It is not. It is not,' and ask God to cure them. This appeal to the subconscious plays a large part in the lives of Hindu children. In India a mother will say to her four-year-old child, 'Say to yourself, you are brave, you are infinite. Nothing can be added to you, and nothing can be taken away from you.' Those two phrases grow into the child's mind. Again, he is taught that he must control the conscious, and learn the art of the unconscious; therefore he must learn to fix his consciousness on the following thought, saying to himself, 'I am free. I am brave. I am perfect.'

One day, when Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji was still a boy, he was standing with one of his sisters outside their front door, when a strange man stopped before them. He had a cord 'round his neck, and he began to low like a cow. They were frightened, and so they were glad when their mother came, for nothing ever frightened her. She looked at the strange man out of her calm eyes, which moved not to the right or left like the eyes of other women, in search of other eyes. Then she said to the children, 'Go fetch me my box of money.' She took out a piece of silver, and gave it to the man, who bowed his thanks, and departed. Then the children plied her with eager questions. 'That man,' she said, 'has killed a cow by accident. Now he has put the cow's rope about his neck, and is going among the people begging for forgiveness. Everyone gives him a piece of money, which is a sign of pardon. People easily forgive an accident of that sort, and the man soon has enough to take to the priest, either to buy food for the people, or a new cow for the temple—generally the first, for even a lame calf costs more than he can collect. In this way he expiates his sin.'

The boy then asked what would happen, if it was not a cow that a man had killed by accident, but another man. Would he be allowed to repent and be pardoned? 'No, but he ought to be.' 'I suppose it is different—killing a man,' the girl said. 'Man of course believes so,' said her mother; 'but if you asked the question of the cow, <sup>what</sup> would be her answer, do you think?'

## VI

### HUSBAND AND WIFE

AND now to return to Ranade and Ramabhai. One evening, in his own house, Ranade looked for the first time upon Ramabhai, and heard from her father's lips how they had been led to come. Ranade said to him: 'Have you with your eyes open considered giving your daughter to me? You are an old landed proprietor, and I am a social reformer, belonging to the widow-remarriage party. Besides I am going to visit Europe, and I shall not do penance for it when I return.' The girl's father replied that he had been told everything, and that he was resolved to give Ranade his daughter. Soon afterwards the two were married. Ranade insisted that the marriage was to be celebrated with only the simplest Vedic ceremonies, and without the many pre-marriage and post-marriage rites and festivities of ordinary times. It took place at the time of evening twilight. During the day Ranade worked as usual at the Court. When the Court rose, he went straight home. After returning from the place of the ceremony, speaking to no one and eating nothing, he went straight to his room, and locked himself in, his mind weighed down with an intolerable oppression.

With that day there began, however, a peculiarly happy and beautiful married life. On the evening of the day on which his new father-in-law went home, Ranade called his child-wife, and said to her: 'You have been married to me, but do you know who I am, what my name is, and so on?' Ramabhai told him what she knew about him. He then asked her about her home affairs. Next he asked if she had learnt to read and write. Finding that she had not, he had a slate and pencil brought, and taught her the first seven letters of the Marathi alphabet. It took Ramabhai nearly two hours to learn to draw those seven

letters without looking at the models. Ranade devoted two hours each evening to teaching her, except when something made it impossible that he should. She became a good scholar.

When she had made good progress with her reading and writing in Marathi, she said she would like to learn English. Ranade was both surprised and delighted, for that very idea had been in his own mind. Ramabhai began with an English reader. When she had finished the second, her husband set her to read the New Testament. He taught her himself. Ramabhai, in her *Recollections*, tells us that Ranade would hear her say the lesson that she had prepared the day before. First of all he would test her spelling and her knowledge of the meanings of the words, and then she would read the passage aloud. There follows in the *Recollections* a passage of biography that shows that Ramabhai had done more than learn languages. While she conned her English reader or read the New Testament, she studied also this man to whom her father had united her.

She was to read the daily passage aloud to her husband. If she could not do it, she tells us, Ranade would be angry. But his anger was not like that of most men. There was no loud exclaiming, no harsh speaking. Ranade would sit dull and sad, and heave a deep sigh; and he would remain dull and sad for a long time. His was not, she says, the wrath of impulse that comes, but goes as quickly as it has come. He would never get angry for slight matters, but when anger came to him, it lasted long. Poor man. He was a judge, a man distinguished, and here was this girl, and her difficulties with the words of an English book. On what of all that he had learnt in the world, poor, baffled man, could he draw to help her? There was nothing that he could think of, and so he must sit dull and sad. I sympathize with him. It is true: there are few things more difficult to see one's way in than this one of teaching. But if Ranade could not do the impossible, which in that matter would have been to



bring about without expenditure of time what can only come slowly as time passes, and the scholar's mind matures, he had all the industry of a good teacher. The perseverance.

This was shown once markedly in Calcutta, whither Ranade had come, bringing his wife, for he was not one to leave her at home, on the business of a Government Finance Committee of which he was a member. Government, for such a man, would find better work from time to time than hearing cases in a Court. One evening, shortly after their arrival in Calcutta, they were sitting in the garden of their bungalow, when a man came in with some Bengali newspapers. Ramabhai told the man that they could not read Bengali, and so did not want a newspaper, but Ranade said to him: 'We'll take it, seeing that you have brought it, and you can start delivering it regularly from next Monday.' When the man had gone, Ranade said to his wife: 'I would be ashamed to say that I did not know the language of a town in which I am to stay for three or four months.' Ramabhai replied: 'Well, if you think that I ought to learn it, teach me yourself. I am willing. Only I won't be taught by any one but you.'

Ranade said nothing at the moment, but he came home the next day late in the evening, and he was accompanied by a man carrying a bundle of Bengali books. It was the first time that Ramabhai had ever known him do his own shopping. He tried to read in several of the books, but as it was a long time since he had studied the language, he had forgotten it. So he said to the man: 'While I am at dinner, go to the bazar and buy a slate and pencil, and don't waste any time.' After dinner he practised the letters on the slate, and bent all his attention to the task of learning to read Bengali. He gave the whole of the next day to it, leaving his work on the Finance Committee undone, and the following day he set Ramabhai to learn the alphabet. He would hold a book in his hand, while he was being shaved, reading aloud and asking the barber

the proper pronunciation of any word of which he was doubtful. Ranabhai told her husband in admiration that he was the prince of *gurus*. The result of it all was that after a month or so they were both able to read Bengali well.

It is not to be thought that these adventures of an Indian woman in the fields of study were all untroubled. Once, Ranade having to leave his home in Poona for work that he was doing under the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act, an Englishwoman was engaged to come daily to the house, and help Ranabhai in her study of English. This caused great indignation among the other women in the house, mostly older women too. They insisted that Ranabhai should not only change her dress, but that she should bathe after touching the foreigner. Otherwise she must dine in her own room, by herself. And once when the girl, at Ranade's suggestion, read an address in English at a public meeting called to advance a project for a girls' high school in Poona, there was a great outcry at home.

This would be as good a place as any for a word. The little boy, seeing the jewelled hand of the jungle, was afraid. What moved the elder women to anger in Ranabhai's home, when she threatened to bring the evils of impurity upon the house by having a foreigner to sit beside her, and teach her a language—surely it was fear? A vague dread of the anger of the gods. To people, such as the English and the French, among whom there are no ceremonial washings, nor a distinction between clean and unclean meats, the fear of Jew or Hindn of the consequences of any breaking of their rule regarding ceremonial washings, or regarding meats, must seem rather childish. It is not childish, if it is the expression of a general fear of life, a fear that is deep-rooted really, and attaches itself to surface things as an escape from itself. This is somewhat too difficult a matter for me. My own experience has told me of the possibility of an all-pervading fear of life, which will fasten on things of the passing hour, but is really a fear of something else. An old jungle fear

surviving, perhaps. Such fears, and such fastenings of fear on passing things, will be found, I believe, in all people. How much of English conventional feeling springs from fear? When the House of Commons rejected the new Prayer Book the other day, what was the deepest-lying of its motives? Fear, probably. To a mind such as my own there was nothing involved that, seen in the light of eternity, could be thought to matter. 'That Prayer Book or this—which?' The reply is, that in the light of eternity, which is for each man as soon as he understands, it did not matter a straw. One Liberal member of the House is said to have voted against the new Prayer Book as a protest against men's tampering with a 'noble classic of literature' What inspires all such protests? Does not fear enter?

The question is one for psychologists. The whole world is probably fear-ridden, India being only more fear-ridden than some other parts. 'They are a fear-ridden people'—it is with that thought in one's mind, and with pity, that one should judge them. Being not too sure that we are not fear-ridden too.

An Indian girl (she is older now, and is one of my own friends) was being taught at a convent school. Her parents were of one of the highest castes. They had sent their girl to that Christian school, because there was no Hindu school where they thought she would be well taught. The girl, when ten years old, decided that she was a Christian herself; that is, that she loved the religion of the people she was among too deeply to think of herself as having another. So she declared herself a Christian, and began to say her prayers to Saint Anthony. Her father met this by telling her that his house could no longer be hers, nor might she use his name any more. He was persuaded by the mother, who argued that they could not be certain that they had a better religion to give the girl than the one she had chosen for herself, to consent that the girl should remain his daughter.

Some two or three years later the man met with a bad motor-car accident, and I believe there were other reverses of fortune. He saw them as the vengeance of his gods for having tolerated the abomination of his girl's apostacy. He was afraid, even terribly afraid. In his dreams he saw gods of destruction with blood-red tongues protruding from their mouths. He saw but one thing to do—to spend the rest of his days in an effort to propitiate them. All Indians, I believe, have some of that man's terror in them. It would take one far to search it all out, and in the search one might add to one's own fear. It is better to put away all fear, and even the thought of another's.

## VII

### BROTHER-IN-LAW AND SISTER-IN-LAW

**T**HOUGH I have put that as my heading, there is to be very little on the subject of the relation between a brother-in-law and a sister-in-law in what follows. I would call attention, none the less, to what there is.

My notes are now from Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's *Reminiscences*. Rabindranath's early days were in two great particulars very unlike those of Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji. The latter gives one the impression that he and the sister about his own age spent most of their childhood together out-of-doors ; in the village street, in the temple courtyard, in the jungle that came up to the windows of the house. In the house itself there was no part that he was not free of. Moreover, he was specially that sister's companion (he was older than she), and she was his. After bathing and dressing for the evening, the girl used to put flowers in her hair, and her brother had to find the flowers, and bring them to her. He might swim in the lotus pond, gathering flowers for her. Once, by the way, seeing her give fruit to a mendicant monk who was staying in the house, Dhan Gopal asked his sister why she did not give him flowers. He had just come in with those for that day. 'I am a woman,' the girl replied, 'and he is a monk. I cannot give him flowers, only fruit ; because fruit has no sex.'

Dhan Gopal, as I have said, was free of space, and he had a sister for special companion. Not so Rabindranath ; he lived between two worlds that he was shut out of—the whole 'outside' and the 'inner' rooms of his home. He saw the 'outside' only through bars, or, when he had grown tall enough to be able to see over a parapet, from a roof-terrace. Of the 'inner' house all that he seems to

have seen as a very small boy was what he could catch sight of by peering through glass windows. It was an unnatural life for him, one cannot but think.

He was the youngest of seven sons ; so that before he could read he had elder brothers who might be beginning to make names for themselves, and one at least of them was doing so. His lot was cast chiefly with two boys, each about two years older than himself ; one his brother and the other a cousin. A point to make here is that, as the brothers married, they did not leave the ancestral home, but lived on in it, the marriage not having lessened the number of the inmates of the house, but having added one to it. One comes in the *Reminiscences* upon the phrase 'the new bride,' which means the latest sister-in-law, as in this passage: "When the new bride, adorned with her necklace of gold, came into our house, the mystery of the inner apartments deepened. She, who came from outside and yet became one of us, who was unknown and yet our own, attracted me strangely—with her I burned to make friends. But if by much contriving I managed to draw near, my youngest sister would bustle me off with: 'What d'you boys want here?—get away outside.' "

How the boy Rabi (for so he was then called for short) was kept a prisoner from 'outside' the grown man has told in these words :

Our days were spent in the servants' quarters, in the south-east corner of the outer apartments. One of our servants was Shyam, a dark chubby boy with curly locks, hailing from the district of Khulna. He would put me into a selected spot and, tracing a chalk line all round, warn me with solemn face and uplifted finger of the perils of transgressing this ring. Whether the threatened danger was material or spiritual I never fully understood, but a great fear used to possess me. I had read in the *Ramayana* of the tribulations of Sita for having left the ring drawn by Lakshman, so it was not possible for me to be sceptical of its potency.

Old enough, then, when a great fear possessed him, to have read, but young enough not to know that there is no potency in a chalk ring. When Rabindranath says he had

read in the *Ramayana*, he may only mean that he had had it read aloud to him, so may have been younger than one thinks at first. My point is that fear possessed him.

The only good that can be said of Shyam is that he would place the boy, with that chalk ring round him, where he could see out of a window. It was not a wide-open window to be sure, or one through the panes of which one could look ; there were venetians, and by drawing them the boy could peer through, and day after day, he says, he passed the whole day peering through. What he could see was a tank, with a flight of steps leading to it, a garden wall with an immense banyan tree along it, and on another side a fringe of coconut palms. I should like a psychologist to tell me what effect on a sensitive mind such a concentration of attention would be likely to have. If there is little of the actual and tangible to hold the mind, the imagination has all the more room to play. Rabindranath makes it clear that as a poet, during his early years of writing, he was short of the material of real experience. He had only the world to express that had gathered within himself.

It may be, I have heard a man say he thinks so, that all India suffers from a lack of things to express. I do not mean, of course, as poets, but in life. It is a denuded country, for all its Delhis, Agras, Puris, and the rest, as Europe is not, as even Russia is not ; denuded of things, buildings, pictures, books, etc., for the eye to dwell on. What is there in all Bengal to compare with Moscow and all that it holds for the eye to dwell on ? I have been to Moscow, and remember watching, while in the picture gallery, a school-master with a string of peasant boys at his heels. There is no such event in a Bengal village boy's life, or if there is the thing, in Calcutta, the Indian Museum, for instance, to make the event possible, it is a thing of yesterday. India, and Bengal especially, is bare as all much-harried lands will be found to be. It was harried for centuries. What a contrast there is between the plains of Bengal and Italy, or even between the plains

of Bengal and the southern English counties. There is a poverty of interest in the country, one, I have thought, that the lives of the people reflect.

The too fierce sun, keeping them indoors, will have its effect on them. Inside their houses what is there ordinarily to deepen their spirits? Nothing. Of things to look at, I mean. The room in which Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, the painter, and his brothers receive visitors is a room of a very great and rare charm. It is the only room in an Indian's house in which I have liked to be. All the other rooms have been of such a poverty of everything, that it has been a pain to be in them. Poor furniture, poorer pictures, poor everything, and an incongruity of thing and thing added. Had I been condemned to live in one of the Hostels in which the college boys live, I should have died. The oppression of their mean poverty is just dreadful. When I speak of poverty, I mean artistic and spiritual. Think of an Oxford or Cambridge college and then of the Eden Hindu Hostel of the Presidency College in Calcutta. You shudder.

To return to Rabindranath, when he was seventeen, he accompanied an elder brother to England. The two first spent six months at Ahmedabad, where the brother was judge. Up to that time Rabindranath's physical world, except for a brief time with his father in Amritsar, when they were frequent visitors to the Golden Temple, and in the Himalayas about Dalhousie, had been confined to a Calcutta house, and what he could see of Calcutta on the way to and from school. That and a riverside bungalow somewhere near. In Ahmedabad the two young men, or the man and the boy, occupied the Shahibagh, a palace of the Badshahs of old. At the foot of the wall supporting a broad terrace flowed the thin summer stream of the Savarmati river. The Judge would go off to his court, leaving Rabindranath all alone in the vast expanse of the palace, with only the cooing of the pigeons, that so familiar sound of the Indian Plains, to break the mid-day silence. An unaccountable curiosity, Rabindranath says, kept him



wandering about the empty rooms. His bedroom was the upper room of the palace tower.

You see what a starved life. When I dwell on it, I soon forget Rabindranath, and the figure, wandering from empty room to empty room, is the figure of almost any Indian whom I have known. Not that I see their physical lives as all so led, but their intellectual and spiritual. They are a lovable people, few anywhere on earth, to my mind, more lovable, but starved.

Before this Ahmedabad time the home in Calcutta had for a time been full of *The Dream Journey*, the poem by which Rabindranath's eldest brother's name is known among his own people. How shut off, however, from his own home life the lad was is shown by this, that he has to say such a thing as 'Eavesdropping at doors and peeping round corners, we used to get our full share of this feast of poetry, so plentiful was it, with so much to spare.'

Rabindranath, empty of so much as his young life was, was much more fortunate than most Indian men; for most the emptiness continues to the dreary end, while for Rabindranath a change came with a 'new bride,' the wife of Jyotirindra, the fifth brother. With her came Rabindranath's chance to make friends with a 'new bride,' and he took it. Took it eagerly, poor starved lad. The girl was a great lover of literature, not merely a reader to kill time; not merely a lover of the Indian epics, which a woman in India so commonly is, without a grain of curiosity about any other writings, except it be one or two of the old Sanskrit dramas. This girl, this 'new bride,' was a student. Rabindranath was her partner in these studies, Jyotirindra being more occupied with music than with literature.

That brings me to another point. The Tagores were far more fortunate than all but the smallest handful of their fellow countrymen, in that they had music for an interest. A whole Indian family, it may be added, the parents, the sons, the sons' wives, the grandchildren, may all be studying music together, and to an extent hardly ever known in

n English home. Rabindranath as a boy and a young man was always singing ; first the music of other men, and afterwards the music he wrote himself for his own songs. He is still a singer in that sense and a writer of song music.

Rabindranath, then, was most fortunate compared with most Indians—in having the interest of his brother's poetry, the interest of study with that sister-in-law, and the music ; still his life was far too empty. First, the Tagore household was far too much thrown back on what it had of its own possession ; secondly, each member of it was too much left to his own thought. What kind of thought it might be, this shows : Rabindranath, looking back upon himself, as he sat at the bottom of a class at school, says :

One of those problems, I remember, on which I used to cogitate profoundly, was how to defeat an enemy without having arms. My preoccupation with this question, amidst the hum of the boys reciting their lessons, comes back to me even now. If I could properly train up a number of dogs, tigers and other ferocious beasts, and put a few lines of these on the field of battle, that, I thought, would serve very well as an inspiring prelude.

NORE. You have read how Dhan Gopal's sister could not give the monk flowers, because they have sex, but only fruit. One of my notes is a companion to that. Dhan Gopal, you remember, was the one who brought his sister her flowers. One day the monk had to go into the tank after him, and rescue the boy, whose feet had become entangled in the lotus stems. When they got to shore, the monk bade the boy take the flowers he had in his hand to the temple, explaining that flowers that he, a monk, had touched, were not things to give to a woman.

## VIII.

### THE MEN

THE stir caused by the publication of *Mother India* set me asking what I knew myself of India. What did I know of the character and social life of the people? Much less than I should have known, for it is stupid to live among a people, and not learn as much about them as possible ; but not nothing. I had learnt something from the biographies and autobiographies of Indians that I had read. There had not been so very many to read. The Indians have not given themselves much to such writings, and those who have have seldom shown much excellence. Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji's book is a good one, Dr. Tagore's is not, I think, anything like as good, but it is good : the rest are very inferior to those two. I was once asked to address the Kristodas Pal anniversary meeting. Two lives of him were given me to read as a preparation. Considering that Kristodas Pal was the leading Indian publicist and politician of his time, a man, too, who would have made his mark at any time and in any country—considering, too, that the author of the better of the two books was Mr. N. N. Ghose, a prominent man among the journalists of his later generation, I could only say that the inferiority of the books was lamentable. Tired men, little interested—they were the books that you might expect of such men. It must be admitted that in many fields the little-competence of Indians is glaring ; but that it is so now, and has been more so in the past, is a thing from which it would perhaps be wrong to draw any hard-held conclusion. It is partly, I think, a result of the long centuries during which India was a harried land. Even in my own short day I have noticed a great change.

That is a digression. To return to what I knew myself of India. The impression I had drawn from the books that

I had read (they were all written, by the way, before *Mother India*; it is not as if they had been written as evidence against Miss Mayo) was of a singularly lovable people, if a not greatly-accomplishing race. Ranade, Ramabhai, even Ranade's father, wrong-headed from fear as he might be, the grandfather who thought the *Meghaduta* was geography, and not tables of imports and exports, Moradali, the boy's mother, Rabindranath's brothers, their wives—if they are not lovable people, where on earth are there lovable people? That there was a fundamental purity in their lives I had never for a moment doubted. If anyone had said to me of such people: 'Is there a great deal of impurity in their lives, do you know?' I should have replied, without hesitation, that I was sure there was not. What would have helped me to say so, was that the impression that I had got of the men I mixed with, was that they had, not more sexual impulse than myself, but less. I believe that to be true, and yet I wonder at it. Nothing would have been more what I should have expected than that, among people whose lives were so empty of interest, as I thought, sexual over-indulgence would be rampant. There is a class of Indians among which it is rife. Over-eating is rife in that class too. The men I moved amongst, Indians working in the banks, teaching, working in the library, fed sparingly. They were unlike the too-rich of the land in the matter of diet. I assumed, or I should have, if I had ever thought of it, that they were equally unlike them in their sexual relations. The men who talked 'smut,' the men whom I knew to be leading more or less loose lives, were not Indians, but Europeans. There was, of course, an Indian or two amongst those I knew whom I would not have trusted. They showed it in their faces. Most of the Indian faces that I have known well have had all the signs of clean living. As I have said, I have wondered at it.

I conformed to the rule of my people, and remained unmarried until I could afford to maintain a family in that station of life to which it had pleased God to call me. I

should have been happier, if, abandoning that station, I had had myself trained to be a carpenter, and had married a village girl. It has taken years of married life, having children of my own, much writing of poetry, many friendships with girls and women—it has taken all those to bring me to a state of relative sweetness in my sexual life ; and there is one 'regret' that still dies hard in me, and I doubt if it will ever completely die. I live with the feeling that, in not marrying at the age when Nature intends a man to marry, and a girl of the age that a man of that age marries, I was defrauded. An Indian will at least not have that corroding sense. In other ways he will be less corroded ; will, when he reaches my age, have a nature that has been subjected to far fewer strains and stresses. The sight anywhere, in a room, in the road, of a young child, at the time when I wrote such poems as *The Little Mistress*, *The Dress of Blue*, things long ago lost in the night of things—the sight of a young child in those days might arouse an emotional longing in me that was almost unendurable. The longing of a man for children may, for all that they are not born in his body, be intense, even devastatingly intense. I believe it can be intenser in a man than in a woman, and, if unsatisfied long enough, have worse consequences. The common comparative freedom of Indian men from the obsession of sexual thought that arises out of sexual starvation is due, I believe, to their living more natural lives than mine has been. I compare them with myself for choice, for by doing so I am the more certain of some at least of the matter.

Some few years ago, writing a preface to a small collection of paraphrases of Vaishnava lyrics, poems that belong to a body of Indian poetry to which much erotic poetry also belongs, having felt that the world of those lyrics was a happier world than ours, I said :

When I was a City clerk among City clerks in London suburbs, and we lived girl-starved lives, then such a breath from a happier world, a world of happy, playful love, not the terrible love of our erotic literature—then such a breath would have

been sweeter than anything on earth. To bear with one as one went in search of a purer air—but how little pure?—among the sodden clay fields about Harrow, even to bear with one when one went, in search of strength against temptation, into the churches of Willesden Green or Hampstead, and their atmosphere of hassock dust.

There was certainly salt enough of purity in the lives of Ranade, Ramabhai, and the rest, to keep them sweet, and there is enough of that salt to keep sweet the lives of the Indian men and women that I know or have known; men such as Pandit Gangulee, his sons, Satischandra Vidya-bushan, Benoyendranth Sen, Adityanath Mukerjee, Dr. P. K. Roy, his wife, Major K. K. Chatterji, his wife, and a score of others whom I have known. A score? Scores.

There is probably no man who is perfectly wise in his sexual life, and probably in every good in that kind there is some evil mixed. If you are to complain of the Indians, at least if I were to, it would be on the ground of their too easy tolerance of little-competence; but even there I should feel that the ground was so unsafe, that it would be better to refrain. There is so much little-competence in all the countries of the world, that one is forced to conclude that Nature intends it. Why she should I do not know: that she does is plain enough. If men can provide themselves with a sufficiency of food, clothing, and shelter, Nature is quite content with them. Little-competence, then—yes, it also is divine.

I may be thought extravagant if I say that I believe, which I certainly do, that the ordinary man at work in Calcutta, far from being vicious, is a man in whose life there is something of asceticism. It may not be wholly from choice; indeed I know that it is not wholly from choice, except in a rare case. Sir P. C. Ray has always given me the impression of being a man in whose life there was certainly some asceticism. He is well enough endowed with this world's goods to afford indulgences. I do not know for certain, but I imagine him to be one of those many Indians who spend much of their superfluity

degree of misery the man might fall into, if I did not give him the money. I was told that he might have to go from house to house *among his neighbours*, but that the money would be raised ; in one way or another it always was.

The man working in a Calcutta office, getting that small salary, will as likely as not live in a village, and come to town daily by train. So that, as well as having no money for vice, he will have no time either. I am convinced myself that he is by natural disposition more a clean-living man than I am myself. If you have imbibed a prejudiced feeling against Indians as sexual beings, as you may have, and it be a deep prejudice, what I have just said may make no deep impression on you ; but you may remember that you were told that the ordinary Indian is too poor and too hardworked to be vicious, both he certainly is, and has a look of asceticism on his face. I have only to step from this room to the next to behold the face of an ascetic-looking man, and in other rooms of the library are others to be found.

All this is negative—what the Indian man is not. What is he? This story will tell a little. An Englishman had a Bengal village to visit, there being an anti-malaria agency to open there. The Englishman's wife went with him. Because of too deep ruts in the road, and it not being safe to motor all the way, the two entered the village on foot, having walked the last two miles. The lady was the first Englishwoman ever seen in the village, and the villagers were deeply impressed that she should have come, and more so that she should have come on foot. So they felt that they must show their gratitude—that an Englishwoman should have walked with no other errand than their preservation from disease. Being poor, what could they give her but some of the produce of their little gardens? They would send her some fruit. It was conveyed to her by a man of the village, who, ordinarily going to Calcutta for his work by the first train, and returning by the last (not a very late train), had to make special arrangements. What he did was to come up to Calcutta one Sunday after-

noon ; spend the night at the railway station, and make the offering of fruit early on Monday morning. That left him plenty of time to be punctual at his office. Mark this. The man would think it nothing to do a thing like that. It would appear to him to be all of a piece with the asceticism of his days.

'If we knew,' some one might say, 'what you and your Indian friends talk about, we should know the Indian mind better. What do you talk about? Is that a question you could answer?' I could answer the question ; yes, certainly I could.

The first Indian I was intimate with was the late Monmohan Ghose. In that he was a poet, he was uncommon ; in other ways, he was not uncommon ; he was much as other clever Indians of the class of society to which he belonged, the same as the class to which Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and Lord Sinha belonged. He used to come to tea with me of a Sunday afternoon, coming a full hour before tea-time, and staying a full hour afterwards ; then we'd go for a walk, separating somewhere in the street. He talked of his work at the Presidency College, but not too much, not thinking it much worth talking of, which I doubt if it was. Our talk was chiefly of poetry—of his poems, of mine, and of the great poems of the Greek and English languages. A little of the Latin poets also, but only a little. He had written a short poem on London that Mr. N. L. Hallward admired, that Charles Russell admired (he spoke to me about it), that we all admired. He spoke much of my poems, which (God bless him) he admired, being the second or third person in the world to do so. He spoke of Tagore's work, spoke in praise, and it was a day, he it noted, years before England 'discovered' Tagore ; it was some such date as 1902. He spoke of paintings too ; of Botticelli and Michelangelo. My early reading of Turgenev was all done in copies borrowed from Monmohan Ghose. I remember his quoting Charles Russell as having said that he, Russell, loved most such didactic poetry as Lucretius's, and the Duke's speech on death in *Measure*



for Measure ; that for the purest lyrical poetry he doubted but he had a defective ear. He read aloud poetry to me, or I did to him. I used to think, listening to him, of the song the dying swan is fabled to sing, or actually does. He once asked me, and I had great difficulty in not laughing, and now see that I should have laughed, which I thought the better to write poetry on, tea or wine. I replied that I didn't think either helped in the least. But then I write myself, as a rule when walking in the streets. If nothing comes of itself, well and good ; it has not been God's will that I should write anything that day. Monmohan thought of things differently ; of poetry as a thing to sit down daily to, and write each day its line. Some of his poetry was weak enough, to be sure ; but then some of the poetry of all the men who have laboured as he did, has been weak enough. No great poetry was ever written so.

With another Indian friend, a surgeon, and a very skilful one, there has been talk of his work ; stories have been told of happenings in his hospital. He talks very interestingly of all that, and very much, I feel sure, as any surgeon of the West would do. There has been talk of the library of which I have charge, and whether it is to remain in Calcutta, or, as from time to time is rumoured, be moved to New Delhi. The surgeon is deeply interested in that matter. There has been talk of the unrest in India, a thing that both he and I see as at bottom an economic question. India is really too poor to have so much of her trade, banking, scientific work, and administration done by aliens, who both cost more while they are at work than men of her own race need cost, and spend a great deal of their salaries and profits, and all their pensions, outside India. So the surgeon and I talk of that, and how mournful it is. The employment of each Englishman means an unemployed Indian, or one pushed down into a lower class than he was born into. There has been no talk to speak of of my work (I mean now my writings), because the surgeon does not feel sure of himself there. He may even

make a book of them. I wanted, of course, to include that parody and some others. It would be very stupid, I thought, to do a thing that would disturb the exceedingly friendly footing on which I had always been with Sir Asutosh (it had been exceedingly friendly ; remember that, please), when a word or two beforehand would make all right. So the next time he and I met, I said :

'Do you remember a parody of Tennyson's *Idylls* that was published in the *Statesman* [one of Calcutta's newspapers] in 1904?'

'Yes. Why do you ask?'

'Do you know who wrote it?'

'Didn't you?'

'I? No! I can tell you who did though. It was Charles Russell.'

'Was it really?' and Sir Asutosh looked up at the ceiling, tilting back his chair, and laughed a great bull laugh. 'I have always understood it was you who wrote it,' he added, when he had done laughing.

Then I told him why I spoke of it ; about the book I wanted to put it in ; had he any objection?

'Objection! Why should I have? One doesn't take such things seriously!' And at that he tilted his chair again, and again roared out a laugh at the ceiling. And that was the man who had never forgiven Russell the parody, thinking all the time that it was I who had written it. I don't now believe that Russell had done anything that Sir Asutosh had not forgiven.

I have known no Indian the equal of Sir Asutosh in capacity. Lord Sinha, I should say, had a finer mind, or better perhaps to put it, a more delicate nervous system, with the mind that goes with such a system. Lord Sinha was to Sir Asutosh, one might say, as Lord Rosebery was to Lord Salisbury.

Sir Asutosh had come for a Council. He was talking to his colleagues about the state of India politically. I was not listening, having notes to make, when I heard, or thought I heard, Sir Asutosh say, 'The whole thing's

rotten.' 'The whole thing's what?' I asked, looking up. 'Rotten, rotten,' said he. I must not repeat what he said next; but I may say what he ended with. It was, 'If there was a Royal Commission now [it was 1923], and I appeared before it as a witness, if I told them everything I think, it would blow the roof off,' and he looked up at the ceiling.

During his last few months, having now retired from the bench, and being no longer Vice-Chancellor, Sir Asutosh was much in Patna, where he was often to be seen, at a students' play, at Professor Coupland's Russell lecture, or what it might be, accompanied by a little grandson. Said a man who watched them closely, and told me afterwards, 'However Sir Asutosh might be a man of iron in his relations with all others, there was not the smallest bidding that that little grandson could not make him do.'

To go back many years. Sir Asutosh's term, not the first, as Vice-Chancellor was shortly to expire. He assumed that it would be renewed, as it had been before. The Government had decided, however, that there must be a change. The first intimation he had of it was from a man's asking him how heavy the work of the Vice-Chancellor was; and who his successor was to be, he first learnt from the newspaper. He wrote a letter of remonstrance. I have heard Mr. Gourlay, who was Private Secretary to two Governors of Bengal, Carmichael and Ronaldshay, describe that letter as the best-written document he had ever read, and completely unanswerable.

And now for another, a very different man. I know him simply as Umraosingh. I have met him only once, but had passed him in the street, when I was struck by his exceedingly fine and picturesque looks. When I met him, he was talking to some others, and I heard him say, 'All the religions are now open to everyone.' He meant, I think, that you might worship God according to the forms of, say, the Hindus, yet be free to take from Christianity anything that would help in your life's pilgrimage. From Christianity, or from any other religion.

'There is nothing,' I said, drawing his attention to me, 'that the Indian is more deeply interested in than religion, and there is no race in the world more interested in religion than the Hindu.'

'Are you interested in Indian religious poetry?' Umraosingh asked.

'Very deeply. I've made English verse paraphrases of such poems.'

'Have you published any of them?'

'Oh, yes; two books. One is mostly prose (it is called *Religious Lyrics of Bengal*), but there is verse in it. One is:

Through all things running there is a golden thread.  
I am it, I, the eternally blossoming seed  
I am the endless fire of truth stars need  
To stretch from one to one, and planet wed  
To planet, man to man; and then it goes  
To silence of gods, and silence of gods beyond,  
Where is the ultimate energy of repose

'Very beautiful.'

'Yes, isn't it?'

Then Umraosingh talked to me. He poured out things—about an Indian writer of Persian poetry, whose name, unfortunately, I did not catch; about new idioms, such as a poet uses, and how the little men of the world first cry out against them; then, when the poet is famous, imitate them; of Iqbal and his poetry; of Puran Singh and his translations; of Brainerd Spooner of the Archaeological Department—

'He was almost the most wonderful man I've ever known,' I interrupted.

'He studied Sanskrit at Benares, living just like us.'

'I know, I know; and Buddhism in a temple in Japan, and they let him see things that no other European had ever been allowed to see.'

We were silent for a little. Then in the distance I saw Umraosingh's two little girls. They were dressed alike, and very much alike in feature, and they made you the

most adorable little-girl curtsies, when saying how do you do? or good-bye. I had had one of them next to me at tea (it was a tea-party), and was, for the moment, very much in love with her. Wrong? Not to have been would have been too utterly stupid.

'What are your little girls' names?'

'Amrita and Indira' [stress on second syllable, and 'i' long].

'I published a volume of English verse not long ago. Not translation this one, but my own verse. There is a poem in it to a little Bengali girl, called Indira, but her name is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable, and the "i" short. You must pronounce the name so in my poem, or it won't scan.'

A woman sang two songs, an Englishwoman.

'The words of that song,' I said to Umraosingh, after the second, 'are out of the Hebrew Bible. Did you know that? [He nodded]. They are Ruth's words to Naomi, her mother-in-law. There is a four-line poem to Ruth in my book:

'Her name is spelt in four bright stars.  
Their sound is the music of old sweet bars.  
The whole world gathers up its truth  
At the beauty and mercy and trust of Ruth.'

But I did not say the last word. for Umraosingh spoke

Give me thy lips, Love—  
 But thou, Love, hast none.  
 Speak with thy voice, Love—  
 But thou, Love, hast none;  
 Formless, timeless, unsearchable one.

'There's an echo of the *Vedanta* in it,' Umraosingh said.

'I know; that's what made me think it would be the one you'd like most.'

'But they talk just like Europeans,' you may say, 'they are just like us.' They are not just like us, but profoundly unlike us. Having much sympathy, they will be likest Europeans, when they are with us, and talking to us. Then we shall be most like Indians, if we have sympathy.

I could go on with this kind of reporting for pages and chapters, of course, recalling talks I have had with Indians. What has been said must be enough. To think that there is something radically vicious in a civilization that can throw up abundantly such men and women as I have known (of women, Mrs. R. C. Bonnerjee, Mrs. A. N. Choudhuri, to mention only two) is just preposterously silly. Many of them may come to grief, like Branwell Brontë; in their family annals may be stories as sad as Harriet Shelley's; yet if the count was strict, I think the lighter record, not in numbers, perhaps, but in depth of misery, would be the record of the East. How many of our Baudelaires have ended disastrously in mad-bouses? Far more than have in the East. Peace, peace.

## IX

### THE WOMEN

**I**F a man is writing a book on the character of India, he must say what he can of its women; but, if the writer is a foreigner, he is likely here to know least at first-hand. Because of the general seclusion of women, of course. And there are not many books from which one could learn. Of those that there are, I have read some, but not as many as I should have read. There is Mrs. Urquhart's *Women of Bengal*, a direct telling of what Bengali women are as she has known them. She has known many intimately. Then there are the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, which I am afraid I have not read, Romesh Chandra Dutt's *The Lake of Palms*, which I have read, and other novels. All of them, of course, show one something of the lives of the women of our time. One learns something here, a little more there. Then one will have known at least a few Indian women in the flesh, as of course I have. From all I have learnt I should say that Indian women generally are more pure than the men, and more competent too; more active, more persevering, more intelligent. In the *Lake of the Palms*, Romesh Chandra Dutt, a man of considerable competence himself, gives it to his women to make the better show. There are two sisters in the story, and they are very lovable natures. A little idealized, perhaps. You have read that in India a woman is a goddess, and must at all times be ready to be worshipped. I gather that she must be ready, too, to be idealized.

I have mentioned the Vaishnava lyrics that I paraphrased. They tell of Radha and Krishna. Under the influence of those poems I wrote a poem called Radha,

in her husband's presence, if a third person is present, and, if that third person is the man's mother, must not address a word to him, it will feel oppressive; but if one knows that that is the rule for all Hindu wives, it will lie more lightly upon one. So too, if one is the only Hindu woman who may use personal names only when addressing those younger than oneself, and that because it is one's husband's strange whim, it may well seem humiliating, but if that is known to one to be the rule for all Hindu women, the case is greatly altered. Those are, all of them, rules for Hindu women, and to us Westerners they do indeed sound very strange.

Even those rules that regulate the after-lives of Hindu widows are, one imagines, made lighter both for the women themselves, and for the members of their families, for their parents, for instance, by the knowledge that they are general. Do not we all bear more easily the hardships that are common? Does not the knowledge that others are poor and unacclaimed, that men of the past have remained poor and unacclaimed, yet have not made too great a 'song about it,' help the single neglected writer, that one of the so sensitive breed, to bear up? The argument is not one to press too far, of course; but there is something in it, a something too generally never for a moment in the minds of those who denounce much of the treatment of Indian women.

These rules for the conduct of wives and widows, and the parallel rules for the conduct of men, for there are such rules (an Indian man has not, for instance, the freedom of address amongst his brothers that Englishmen have), were not imposed on Indian society by some whimsical tyrant. *They arose out of the soul of this wide Eastern world.* What the dreamers had to secure was that the civilization established in these lands should be imperishable, undecaying. That is, imperishable from any decay arising within it. It might be overthrown by men from beyond the seas; it might become corrupt from an evil example from outside. It was not to decay from



within. How decay from within would subtly work no man knew. That is a thing never known. We are not sure that English society is not decaying from within; rather we know that it is decaying, or some of us think we do. We—none of us—know how that decay might have been prevented. Had we known, we should have taken steps. The Indian social legislators did not know exactly what evils they must guard against, or what good secure beyond making their society an undecaying one. We know no more. The Indian of to-day, looking back—he knows no more either. We—none of us—can be sure that this or that social rule is one that came from the prompting of the wisely intuitive dreaming soul, and has contributed to keep Indian society sweet, or whether it was prompted by some still not outgrown animal instinct, possibly by a sadistic nature. I would listen to no men on this subject but the Shakespeares of the world; I would trust no man's sense but the finest poet's, the inspired man's. All others, all psychologists, much more all social innovators, use weapons too blunt. Until I have heard Shakespeare speak, I will form no last judgment for myself, or not until the need to act makes the formation of a judgment imperative.

A thing indisputable is that Hindu society has perpetuated itself. It is very old. It was created; it anchored itself in the deepest souls of the people; it has not perished, but has persisted. That proves that there was salt enough in it to keep it sweet. The secret of its persistence may be simply that it is refined; that Hindu men and women generally had in them the capacity to respond to the aspirations of the best Hindus. One of their aspirations was to remain poor in this world's goods; relatively poor, I mean, and to lead simple lives. The decay of England will come from the vulgarity of the would-be rich. When Mr. Lloyd George, who cannot write, who will never add a line to literature—boasts that he has made more money as a writer,—in how few years?—than he drew as a cabinet minister *could*

seventeen years, and when no one sees any harm in it, there being no ancient Roman, Abbot Samson, Chinese poet, or Indian Brahmin to listen, and judge him, what he is speaking is the vulgarity of the would-be rich. The great mass of Hindu society remained for centuries determinedly poor. One sees that it were better that they remained so for ever—better for their souls. Our example in striving to get rich quickly does them no good whatever.

I am not sure at all whether I can always distinguish between the simple life that I see as so good for the Indian (if you are to be rich, and lead a crowded national life such as England's, refinement in your society must be so deep, if your society is not to decay, that its influence extends to the last ploughman, as Indian and Chinese refinement extends to the last coolie; and how are you to be sure that you can leaven the lump with such refinement? Better, then, remain a society poor in this world's goods). I am not sure at all, I repeat, whether I can always distinguish between the simple life that I see as so good for India, and the empty life that I mourn for her. If I had to decide for her, I should say, 'Better change nothing; the risk is too great.' If I see the life as empty, which I do, it may be only because I am myself a striving, ambitious, pushing, vulgar man.

If I may continue what is a little out of place in pages headed 'the Women,' there is a thing in Calcutta, known to a very few. It is called the '*Maidan Club*.' A few men meet late-evening after late-evening at the Roberts statue on the maidan, and sit on the plinth, and talk for an hour or more. You will find Mr. G. C. Bose of the Bangabasi College among them, and Sir P. C. Ray for another, that most lovable of men, that man the tones of whose speaking voice are so appealing, that they make you think of Orphic song. Sir P. C. Ray brings a newspaper, and spreads it to sit on. The others sit on the bare stone. That is their kind of simplicity. I have known both those men for twenty years and

more. I know that they have done hard work, and are still hard at work; but I have wondered often how much they have done of it under a stimulus from us English; how much less of it they would have done, had we never come near them. Neither we nor any other foreigners. That they have worked as they have worked means that their lives have not been as empty in my sense; but in that those talks on the plinth are their greatest pleasure of the day, which I am convinced is the case, their lives are empty in my sense. I sometimes attend the meetings of the club; at least I have done it once or oftener; oftener I have joined the men, walking part of their way home. I presume that I divert the current of the talk into other channels; I do not know what the range of talk is among themselves. I do not know, but I feel pretty certain that it is frequently as empty of intellectual pith as the talk of children. If I had to attend the meetings of the club nightly; I should soon be craving for the raw red meat of talk of what Professor Gordon calls 'fundamentals.'

Having said so much of the rules laid down for the conduct of Indian wives and widows, and having followed the train of thought that speaking of them led to, let me now come to Mrs. Urquhart's *Women of Bengal*, a book from which there is less to be learnt than from the novels perhaps, but where knowledge is presented compact. This is one of Mrs. Urquhart's paragraphs:

To be greeted by a Bengali woman of the secluded classes on the threshold of her home is to become aware immediately that India has treasures which she does not display to the common eye, and that here we have found something fine and rare. Her winsome and dignified manner reveals a personality that possesses 'quality.' And such quality can only be the fruit of a civilization and social culture not yet, perhaps, wholly understood or appreciated by the European. The European cannot be blamed for this lack of understanding [it is very stupid of him, all the same], because it is in large measure due to the very fact of the seclusion of Indian women. This seclusion has resulted, among other things, in a great part, and that the better part, of the life of the people being hidden from the

foreigner [but you should add also that the foreigner did not look]

It is a pity that Mrs. Urquhart did not write that paragraph more carefully. One has only to stop for a moment and think, to see that the quality of a Hindu woman cannot 'only be the fruit of a civilization not wholly understood,' as if our not understanding Hindu civilization was what has made it what it is. Indian civilization made itself without any action or inaction on our part. It was made long before we appeared on the scene. One is thankful to have so certain a testimony as Mrs. Urquhart's for the fact that it has a great quality. The thing that it would be of most value to know is whence the quality came. I have noticed the promise of the quality in the mere looks and gestures of Indian children. A word has already been said of that. It is a thing as delicate as the bloom on a peach or a grape, or the dust on the wings of a moth. I have thought of it as coming as the combined result of things physical and spiritual; of centuries of bright sunshine, and of the sonority of Vedic song, heard morning and evening for countless generations. It is the quality of refinement. Mr. Havelock Ellis has a passage somewhere on the greater refinement of the Cornish compared with the English, Cornish civilization being, he says, by far the older of the two. He thinks that any civilization, if it be only old enough, refines the very nervous system. Refinement ceases to be a thing merely of the mind. It is in the blood and tissues.

Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerji, I remember, tells a story of his little sister; how she was made so angry by a monkey that snatched away their flowers and fruit, that she kicked it, and then how she wept to think that she had been made by a dumb creature to lose her little-maiden dignity. There you see, for the child cannot have been twelve, for she died at that age, I remember, a proof of the strength of the hereditary good-breeding of the race.

This is one of Mrs. Urquhart's pictures. She is describing the Bengali woman:

The lustre and expressiveness of her fine eyes, and the beauty of white and even teeth light up her face. The features are refined and sometimes of a classical regularity, and, in families where a careful selection of good-looking brides has perfected the type, one sees occasionally young women of rare and fascinating beauty.

Her hair is plentiful, sometimes to an extent one had thought of as legendary, falling, when unbound, like a cloak to her ankles. It is glossy and of a blue-black hue, and its natural sheen is heightened by the constant application of oil and by frequent exposure to the rays of the sun. Natural curls are common enough [Sita of the *Ramayana* is always described as having curly, blue-black hair], but are not encouraged, as it is a sign of dignity and modesty [Mrs. Urquhart means that they think so] to have smoothly braided locks. On special occasions the braiding is done in intricate designs.

This is another of her pictures. I choose it for the charm of it.

The feet being untrammelled from childhood, are usually delicate in shape and expressive of refinement. Children at school pick up pencils, and even needles, very deftly with their toes, and often express embarrassment by curling and uncurling them, as we might do our fingers.

. . . Too much veracity, 'bounce,' and impulsiveness, are considered unbecoming even in a young maiden. This standard of quietness is as old as Mann, who says: 'One should not be restless with hands or feet, or restless with the eyes.'

Add this. It is from *Caste and Outcaste*.

In the evening when our father, her lord, came home, he would send his servant to my mother's maid; and his servant would say, 'The lord of the house, now that he has bathed and is unstained by the dust of the street, wishes to see the goddess of the house, if she permits.' Then the maid, after delivering the message to my mother, would return and say, 'The consecrated one will receive you before the dusk hour.' After my mother had seen my father, came her evening meditation, lasting about an hour.

What is Miss Mayo's word of it all?

## X

### THE CHILDREN

**B**ECAUSE of my great love for them, not because I think you will learn much or anything of Indian character from these particular pages, I would write about the children of India. As I have said, I had a great child-hunger; I was the more ready to see whatever charm the children might have. Equally ready was Emily Eden, however, and I do not know that she was very full of child-hunger. She wrote once to a sister at home, asking her if she could not have one brown baby for a change. There are other things in her letters from India that show how strongly the children here appealed to her eyes and heart.

The boys are not at all shy; the girls usually are a little. If you sit down in a tram beside a boy, and if the look of you interests him, he may look up into your face, and ask where you are going to. He will say simply: 'Where are you going to?' and you know that the no 'please' means simply that he has not been taught this foreign language at school quite well enough. A little girl would ask no question, but, if you are bicycling, and she passes in her father's car, if you look interestedly in her face, she will smile to you, although she may never have seen you before. If one day you call at a house, where you visit, and find that they are all out but two little girls, if you decide to sit in the garden until some of the bigger ones return, the two little girls will entertain you. They will stop their play, and stay with you and talk (probably one of them will do it all, the older); will offer you something to eat and drink. I have been smiled to by a little girl, passing in a car; have been entertained very charmingly by two little girls, and I

do not count these things as nothing. I count them as so much, that I cannot forget them.

I was waiting one day in the botanical gardens here, seated on a bench, until the ferry boat should come. A very little girl, with a little bit of loin cloth on and nothing else, came running round a corner. She had not expected to find a sabib there; the sight of me stopped her as if she had been frozen in her flight. She did not run away, but stood there regarding me long and fixedly. So I smiled to her. She smiled back, but it was a smile faint as the first breath of spring after winter. So I smiled again. The answering smile was bolder. It was then, I suppose, that I spoke to her; but I have forgotten what I said. I half remember that it was determined by a Hindi word that happened to be in my head before the child ran round the corner. It was the chief word in my sentence. After either the second smile or my speaking she drew nearer, not all as one progression, but first about half the distance, and then the remaining half. Finally she sat down on the bench beside me, pressing against me, I asking her questions, as who her father was and what he did, from which I learnt that she was a little pahari, or girl from the Hills, which accounted for her being less shy than the Plains girls. Finally she seated herself in my lap, and began stroking my cheek with the softest hand I had ever felt of hands no longer a baby's.

There have been other Indian children in my life, each for a little something, and if, as the world judges, they were all small things, they were big for me—with my child-hunger that it seemed would never be satisfied. The day's work took me during some years up and down very ugly cement stairs in a building in Bowbazar Street (no human being was ever meant by God to see such ugly stairs; steps until some point in time were always beautiful things; why are there so many hideous stairs now?) They were lit up, if a little girl was about, as she sometimes was. I had little games of chasing

her or the like. She was the girl to whom I was moved to write this:

Her eyes were beautiful and glad,  
 With a quick light within,  
 Like sunbeams on the brightest sea,  
 As back I drew her face to me,  
 With hands beneath her chin,  
 Meaning to kiss, but One forbade.

Suddenly came the thought they had,  
 Who brought to Christ that day  
 The little children whom He blessed;  
 And then I said: 'The thought will rest  
 Within me, on my way,  
 Of eyes so beautiful and glad.'

Perhaps the kiss, too sweet, had been  
 As elfin-wand to touch  
 Into a woman that dream-child,  
 With mouth that never would have smiled,  
 And I have longed too much  
 For kisses on a face unseen.

Then there was the chowkidar's little boy at Maner in Bihar, where there is a great tank and a mausoleum and a mosque; and where I have spent evening hours, when the beauty of the late sunshine, and of the trees and ferns bathed in it—it is something in the light that makes everything so beautiful; nowhere but in the Indian Plains does one see just that beauty—was of a purity that makes speaking of it in worn words sound almost gross. One wants words that have never been used before. Those Maner hours were hours of great peace. Suddenly we came upon the boy seated by the side of the tank, and a little sister was beside him, with, on her almost infantile hip, a still smaller brother. 'A Botticelli face!' was my companion's word; my thought being that just so, with just such a composed little face, and those delicately long, curled lashes, must the child Sri Krishna have been.

I had seen the boy before, when we arrived. I see hundreds of boys, interesting to watch, but nothing special. Then I see one with whom I mean to be friends,



so far as it is possible to be friends with a person in so different a world, and so seldom seen. There is a way; you do not speak; you just look into the eyes. The look says: 'You are not to think of me as like the other sahibs who come. There is a difference. If I never come back, you are not to forget: if I do come back, you are to remember when I came before.' The eyes answer back a little sadly; 'What is it?' My part is to remember too, and if I am asked again to go to Maner, to have the thought of seeing the chowkidar's boy again as the first thought.

All this may seem very childish. How can any man care so much for things so small? I do not know, but only that I do care. There was a point on the Gariahat-road, which I used to go to, and there sit, looking across a stretch of paddy fields. Boys would collect, a few, seeing a sahib there where no other sahib sat. They would come and look at me. One I made friends with, though I never spoke to him. The others were as animals to me, and I disregarded them. The friendship with the one was something to me; it was a much bigger thing to my way of thinking than many of the things that you would have supposed were much more to me. You might not have known that it even existed; it was all so a thing of being near, and a smile, and a thought. We do not know what we are. When the visible universe is folded up as a vesture, and changed, what was begun among the ears of rice may endure. How do you know it will not? We know nothing for certain. If a man has an emotion that is not clearly impure, he should cherish it to the grave and beyond. I think so.

It is common enough for one's companion, at least if it is a woman, to say something like, "What a pretty child," or, "What an interesting face:" so that one may assume that so much interest in other people's children is common. In this or that person this interest will be found in a greater degree. It is with myself a very great interest. It would be for me, any day, quite occupation

enough for an evening, to go to one of our public gardens, and just watch the children, or even to look into the perambulators in Chowringhee, and see what they contain. I can remember suggesting to the Indian girl who decided, when she was ten, that she was a little Christian, and would say her prayers to Saint Anthony—I shall be mentioning her again about animals—that she and I, she being then sixteen or seventeen, should go and see what babies we could find. She had that interest very strongly: she would be quite serious about which she preferred, which she would take home with her, if there was any taking home to be done.

It is commoner for a man's interest in little children, or a woman's—that part, I mean, that overflows to other people's children—to settle on this or that chosen one, or these or those chosen ones; so that even by a Lewis Carroll the rest are past by unnoticed. My own instinct is to have pets as well as another, but not to the exclusion of any other child that fate may bring my way. I look hard into almost every child's face that I see. So recently, when just as I was about to turn a street corner I heard someone singing in an unusually sweet, clear voice for an Indian, I was prepared. It was a little boy of eight or nine, seated singing on the pavement. If I could write music, I would write what he was singing, in his sweet, clear voice. His little face was very sharp, suggesting not enough milk and other nourishing foods. Nine-tenths of Bengal, I believe, are underfed, and according to Sir William Willcocks, and he struck me, if ever man did, as a genius—that is, a seeing man; the only kind, really, that sees—it is all because the Bengal Irrigation Department does not know its business. Someone should look into that—but I have already said so. I looked hard into the boy's face, as I passed, and he looked hard into mine. Once to meet in Time, and never again. To my mind that is one of the deepest of life's mysteries: why at all, in God's name, if only once? We do not know. I had the thought, I am afraid, that

it was the first time that ever an Englishman had looked hard into that boy's face, and that his face would never again be so looked into. Why cannot the others be more interested?

Then I passed on, but a few seconds later the recollection of his underfed face smote on me; so I went back, and gave him a two-anna bit "to buy *mitai* with" (no use telling him to buy milk). Seeing me do that, a little round-faced, fat, bright-eyed girl, two or three years younger, ran up, crying for something for her, and holding out her hand. I gave her a two-anna bit also, though I felt she could not sing, and would never understand anything in God's world but how to suckle brats and cook. I believe that in much breathing near Indian children there is more to be learned of India than in such an occupation as listening to the debates in the Legislative Assembly.

I have said a word about Asutosh Mookerjee and the little grandson, whose smallest bidding he would do. How, it may be asked, do Indian men feel about children, their own and other people's? That Indian servants who are much with English children conceive the deepest of affections for them, and will remember them for long years, is well known. Even an Indian coachman, one who will only drive the children out, and so sees so very much less of them, will grow very fond of them. Their patience in playing with them is inexhaustible, their gentleness with them—the men's at least; I would not be surety for a cross old ayah—is a thing that never ends. Their concern, when they fall sick, is little less than the parents' own. My own eldest son was sick for six or seven weeks together in Mussoorie, when less than a year old. A local man, Rustom Beg, had been engaged as his bearer; a great tall bony man. He had not known the child for much longer than the six or seven weeks, if as long. Yet his concern was very great and real; and when at last the boy recovered, his word was: "Now that the *chhotā sahib* is well, everything is better." Nothing truer could have been said: the

sunshine was a more welcome thing, their bread and their water were sweeter. I was not there, but I was told of it all by letter, and nothing of its kind could have been more impressive. The Indian servant's way with an English child is perhaps the most lovable trait in his character. They are the same about their own children, only more so. All Indians, no matter of what class, are good about children: the Indian gentleman will be the same about an English child as an Indian servant; that is, he will be just as ready "to worship and fall down." I have a note on that point by Mrs. Barbara Vere-Hodge: "A young Indian came to luncheon the other day (this was in England), the son of my father's Subadar Major. His whole face lit up, when he saw baby, and he almost ran across the room to see her. She smiled on him very graciously. Their love of children is very beautiful, I think, and in their tenderness they are more childlike and understanding than we are."

## XI

### ANIMALS

**I**NDIA is said to sin grievously in its treatment of animals. Who in a sense does not? We must be fair; international courtesy requires that we should be scrupulously fair, when another nation is in question. So we must go deeper into this question of the treatment of animals than might to you seem necessary.

One has not to go far back in English history to come to an age when Englishmen cruelly ill-treated, in mines and in factories, the animals commonly called women and children. That was put a stop to, one man having great influence in the matter. About the time he had that influence Froude was telling Carlyle how certain English huntsmen, having failed to draw a fox, and meaning not to be done out of the day's sport, got a sheep dog, smeared aniseed on its pads, and set it to run and make sport for them. There would be a great outcry, if that was done today. Still, one may ask how deep in us is the feeling of kindness towards animals? How much is a man this or that, because to be it is the fashion of his day? How great a pleasure or profit would turn that fashion into its opposite? These are difficult questions to answer. I do not know the answers. I do know, however, how skin-deep things can be in men. We call ourselves Christians, and in a way we do follow Christ; but in other ways are we not pure pagans, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, men? I have met many men and women, women especially who would be Christians in more than profession, who would really be Christians, yet who were incurably pagans. Men may have two minds in them, and the two be walled off from each other. So I am not certain how kind to animals I am through and through me. I know that some of my kindness towards animals is, to put it so,

dictated to me by the spirit of the hour (not to call it the fashion), while I allow, of course, that that spirit being the spirit is a credit to—to whom? To each Englishman a little? I am afraid not, but that it is the credit of a few men who, being really humane, having had so much influence over the rest of us, that we have put our cruelty aside. I can remember not being made indignant, as a boy, by the sight of boys torturing insects. Black beetles—they caught them, pinned them to the wooden henchies in the playground, and then with the sun and a magnifying-glass burned them to death. Nasty little boys. Yes, but how much of the nasty little boy is still in me?

I know that Indians, under the temptation of profits to be made, can be horribly cruel to animals. If a goat's skin, which you can sell for money, is worth more money if the goat is flayed alive, if you do not watch all the time goats will be flayed alive. Water-buffaloes, if you can make a little more out of them, by using them as draught animals, than you can make out of bullocks, will crowd the hullocks off the streets, though men know that the bullock is happy enough in the street, while the long hours out of water are torture to the buffalo. Had I been in the goat-skin trade, and had been the first to hear that the skin would be worth more, if you skinned the beasts alive, I think I should have said, 'Oh, but you couldn't do that,' meaning that I thought it would be too cruel. Had I been in transport, and had been the first to think of using the buffalo, I think I'd have proceeded to do it. I should not have realized what I was doing.

I doubt if more can be said in utter truth than that there have been some English men and women with a passion of kindness for animals. The rest of us are subdued by forces and influences outside us to be kinder than our nature. I believe that those things could be said of Indians also, with this added, that the forces and influences outside each Indian are exceedingly weaker (that is perhaps a little too strong an expression) than those

outside each Englishman. The child who decided when she was ten that she was a little Christian, is the Indian I have known myself in whom the love of animals was deepest. I used to go and see her for an hour or an evening, when she would sit with two kittens in her lap. She was the kind of person who, if she had a cat to take to another house, would take it in her arms, and get into a taxi, and go so. Out of any person's arms that the cat did not feel was a friend it would struggle in fear, on finding itself being carried away. I know that that girl once brought a cat and two kittens to this house, and I saw no sign of any basket. They were the same two kittens that had sat in her lap. Seeing the mother, or another cat, she would say such a thing as: 'I picked her up out of the gutter in the street. She was a tiny kitten, and so dirty and wretched, and she had a leg broken. I brought her here, and washed her, and put her leg in splints; and you would never think, would you, that she had had a broken leg?' Or it might be: 'That was another cat that I picked up in the street, and she had been hurt somehow, and that's why there's that squint in her tail.' Or: 'Once she was sick for days. If she ate anything she was sick immediately. So she wouldn't eat, and I was afraid she would die. So I took her in my lap, and thought a long time of her getting better, and then I said the Lord's Prayer aloud, very fervently, and went to bed, and she woke me in the morning, mewing for something to eat. She hadn't any more sickness.'

God knows that more of her spirit should be in her fellowcountrymen. Pray for them. There is probably nothing better to do.

I have a note, and here would be the best place for it. First to say that it was written before *Mother India* was published. I had been writing in Calcutta on behalf of the buffaloes of its streets. One of the extravagant things that I had suggested was that each English girl in the place should go without one new frock, and dances at

Firpo's for a month, and buy a buffalo, and set it free. Now you will understand the allusion in my note.

The note is not all of it relevant in a chapter on the treatment of animals, but I think I will not cut it down. In a book on the character of India, there should be word of the setting; for it is not without its influence. If I could make the book half as long again, I would fill that half with words of the Indian settings. Suffer, then, one such word.

. . . the house was in the Chajoo Bagh, that place of fine trees and rose gardens. I had sat out in it the night before until midnight, it being there wonderfully cool, though there was no wind. The moon had been full, and shone all the time, and in its light the mango trees were of a most impressive blackness. On the table on which I am writing is a brass mug of red roses, the third or fourth they have brought to me. In the garden, at that late hour, I talked of letter-writing with a man who seemed to have made his exercise of that art as much of a piece of an honeycomb, a sweet thing in his life, as I have done myself.

In the evening I had been for a walk along the canal bank that you come to some way beyond Patna in the direction of Dinapore. You pass little villages, and at this time of the year you will see the unmuzzled oxen treading out the corn. Four or five of them, yoked to a pole, walk round and round until their feet have separated the grain from the straw or millet stalks. The villagers then gather the grain into great yellow heaps, and the straw or stalks they tie in bundles, and place upright in stacks. Against the sides of the heaps of grain they lean to a covering of straw, to keep the grain clean, one supposes, or to prevent the wind blowing it away. Those village threshing-floors are full of lights and torches that are good to the eyes, especially of a city man. Then there are the cattle, the oxen and the buffaloes. Has any Calcutta girl procured the release of a buffalo? I suggested it. I am only another voice crying, so I suppose nothing was done. Having seen the buffaloes on that canal bank, I still more want to see something done.

One buffalo that I strode past quickened its step to come up to me, so I turned back to look better at it. Remembering the eyes of the buffaloes in the Calcutta streets, it was at its eyes that I looked. They were a soft and velvety blackness, like wells of perpetual peace, really wonderful things to look into. A little later two young oxen were led past me. They



had such beautiful faces and bodies, were so alike, so exactly of a size, were so spotlessly clean, and so spoke of health and profound content, that I immediately exclaimed: 'But they are Castor and Pollux.' They were two Greek gods appearing, as men are too vulgar-eyed, as oxen. They should have been led by a wood-god, or a pasture-god, for oxen and woods do not go together. 'I will tell Queen Chajoo of those oxen, when I write,' I added, that being the name that I had chosen in my play to give a girl to whom I was under a promise to write from Chajoo Bagh. Letter-writers make constant play with names and changes of name. But perhaps I am giving away too many secrets, which is not a thing to do.

## XII

### SYMPATHY

IT is related that, after a garden party given at Belvedere by a new Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, a departing guest, an Indian, was heard to say: "*Amiability bahut hai, lekin true sympathy—kuch na!*" Of amiability towards them that Lieutenant-Governor had abundance, but in true sympathy for Indians he was sadly lacking. The charge oftenest made against Englishmen, ruling or teaching Indians, is that they are not sympathetic. Let that be looked into.

An Englishman was going through the manuscript of a catalogue of Arabic MSS., correcting the English or the sense, where it needed correction, with the compiler of the catalogue, Shams-ul-'Ulama Mawlawi Hidayat Hosain, seated by his side, so that any matter of doubt could be discussed between them. The Englishman's bearer by and by brought his tea. The papers were in a thick file board, so that there was it between them and the rug, when the Englishman, reaching down, laid them on it by the side of his chair. The MSS. dealt with in this part of the catalogue were commentaries on the Qoran. Immediately the Englishman's hand had laid the bundle of papers on the rug, the Shams-ul-'Ulama picked them up, saying, "May I put them on the other table?" "Are they too holy to be on the floor?" said the Englishman. He did not expect the answer to be "yes," but that was the answer. You will say that he must have thought the answer might be "yes," or he would not have asked the question. That is not so: he explained that he was like an automaton, when he asked the question; his action in speaking was involuntary. He had a certain nervous sensitiveness that registered what an Indian he might be

if he would care to see the family jewellery. So he went in and upstairs, and was shown it. Then they took him outside, and the other brother, the elder, began to explain the alterations that they had in mind, the Englishman following as best he could. Suddenly he could follow no more, for it was as if a little window inside him had opened and shut. Looking the young man full in his eyes, he spoke.

"Was it in order that I might be seen here by some one, that you asked me to come?"

The answer, which was "yes," was accompanied by a smile of relief.

"Oh, who did you want should see me?"

"Our uncles."

"Oh, what are they up to?"

He was told: it was another story of oppression of the fatherless and the widows; but an Englishman's presence there as the friend of those particular fatherless ones was enough to stop the intrigue.

The interest of the story is again the sensitiveness of an Englishman to an impression from an Indian. The moment before what felt like a window opening and shutting in him, the Englishman, so he has told me, had not the shadow of a dream of a suspicion that the alleged business on which he had been brought to the house was not genuine. Afterwards he could see, of course, that, had he been a Criminal Investigation Department officer, whose training is to teach him to ferret out hidden things, and whose occupation sharpens any sense he begins with for the seamy side of things, he would probably, at an earlier point, have suspected that there lay something concealed behind his visitor's invitation to him to visit the house; that he might have got at the truth there and then, without rising from his chair. However, he was no such officer. There was nothing in his occupation to lead him into the habit of suspecting that what might be said to him by an Indian concealed something more important. He would have said himself that he was the

but therein speak three parts of prejudice to one of knowledge or understanding. The very person who may have given that answer, or even the answer: "None at all," may half an hour later, the conversation having shifted to the topic of servants, be heard extolling his own bearer, and not only as a man good at his work, but as one the speaker is fond of. If you point out that there is a contradiction between that and his saying that he finds no good in the Indians, or whatever it may be he has said, he will tell you that his bearer is an exception. As if it was at all likely that Providence would have given him the only good bearer in the place.

That brings one to another point. Good servant as the bearer may have been to that man, he would have been a better servant to a better master. There is nothing truer than that Englishmen in India get from their servants very much the service they deserve, those who deserve good service the least getting the worst service. There will be a difference, one supposes, between the work that a European will do for a master that he likes and respects and for one that he hates, but it is nothing to the difference between the work that an Indian servant, clerk, or what it may be will do for a master he loves (that is the word he uses) and for one that he feels is not sympathetic. I have known striking instances of that. I have known an Indian make a good clerk to one master and a positively bad one to the master who followed him.

I once was interested in the clerk of a school in Calcutta. He had been my pupil. His master spoke well of him. Then the Englishman took furlough, and another took his place. I knew the second man too. I had to listen to many complaints from him about Narendra Babu. (That was the clerk's name; he is dead). No word was too bad to paint Narendra Babu in the new master's opinion. He would even deliberately "lose" letters from parents, just to get his master into trouble, and make his life a misery to him. I decided at last that it was time to interfere. I asked Narendra Babu what all

these complaints meant: was he doing as good work for the new master as for the old? (he assured me he was) had he deliberately "lost" letters? (he denied indignantly that he had). I was about to decide that I could make nothing of it, when the hidden sense in me awoke.

"Narendra Babu," I asked, "do you think Mr. . . . unsympathetic?"

He did; he thought him very unsympathetic.

"You don't love him, then?"

"No, sir."

"You do love Mr. Wood (he was the master gone on furlough)?"

"Yes."

"I see. Then you have *not* done as good work for Mr. . . . as you used to do for Mr. Wood? You *have* deliberately "lost" letters in order to get Mr. . . . into trouble?"

The answers to those questions were all "yes" this time. I tried to explain to the man how wrong all that sounded to me; how, as a man was paid for his work, he must do it as conscientiously for one man as for another. Narendra Babu would have none of that. "We think differently," he explained: if a master was kind to a clerk, then the clerk would love him as he loved his father, or even more, and must do all he could to please him; but, if the master was unsympathetic, then he owed him nothing. I saw there was no shaking Narendra out of that belief, and that no power could prevent his doing his worst work as long as he had Mr. . . . for a master; so that the only remedy was to change his master.

I remember being asked by one of the men who formed the Commission that some years ago investigated the affairs of the Calcutta University, with Sir Michael Sadler as Chairman, if I could account for the fact that this or that *memsahib* had servants so much better than those of her neighbours. I said I thought I could, but I would ask Dr. Gregory first what he thought accounted for it.

He replied that it probably lay in there being in the better-served mistress something as subtle and as difficult to account for as a person's having charm. He was not perhaps so very far from it.

From all these things; from Englishmen looking into the Indians as if they, the Englishmen, were C.I.D. people; from their having, most of them, their share of race-prejudice; from their mere lack of human feeling for the Indians with whom they are in contact making those Indians work worse for them, it may be much worse too, than they would for others—from all that I am disposed to think that what a man may learn of Indians, it may be after long service in the country, is hardly worth six pence. I would even pay money, a lot of it too, not to think of Indians as I have heard many an Englishman say he does.

The Indians are extraordinarily sensitive to the hidden things in the English with whom they are brought in contact; not only the things that the particular man or woman is conscious of, and is trying to conceal, but also those things that are not in consciousness. One of my friends long ago was Charles Little, Professor of Mathematics at the Presidency College here. I have heard him say that, if, while he was working out a problem on the blackboard, he hesitated for an instant, the next minute the class was saying to itself: "Mr. Little is forgetting his mathematics." I have no doubt that it was saying so; for I have taught classes of Indians myself, and, though I got childish answers enough to my questions (one man's *written answer* to a question concerning gold movements in Europe was: "Because the distance from Paris to London is greater than the distance from London to Paris"), they always knew, all of them, if I let my attention wander, and made some blunder. I used to think of them as answering my questions with their intellects, but, when it came to criticising me, thinking through all the pores of their skins. An Indian so thinks all the time. A *memsahib* may be very con-

siderate of her servants, speak to them kindly, do things for their children, doctor them when they are ill—if, in her buried heart, she thinks of them as belonging to an inferior race, not as human as her and her kind, but nearer to the animals, her Indian servants will all know that; they will resent it, and she will never keep a servant long. If you know, in your subconscious mind, of no difference of race between you and the Indians, if an Indian is just another man to you, and may be more capable or less than this or that English neighbour, better worth talking to or not so well worth talking to, more interesting to you or less, you may do less for him than the *memsahib* did for her servants, being too busy to bother about him; may be angry with him and scold him for his mistakes—he will still care for you more than her servants care for the *memsahib*, he will stick to you while her servants leave her. I know all that; I have seen proof of it time after time. The only thing the Indian cannot forgive is that you should turn from him in your hidden being because of his race. If you do turn, he invariably knows.

### XIII

#### SOME INDIAN STORIES, I.

THE political relations of the future between Indian statesmen and English statesmen will not be as they have been in the past. The reason is that in future what may be called the racial thought of India must be taken much more account of than it has been in the past. By English statesmen, I mean, of course, when Englishmen alone in India were responsible for her government, if a thing had to be done, it was sufficient if it was done as commended itself to the politicians in London. What those politicians had to do was merely to know enough about India to understand why Englishmen sent out to govern India should not make exactly the same proposals for dealing with this or that Indian problem as if it had been a Kentish or a Yorkshire problem. In future it will be different. A problem in government is not as a problem in mathematics, one admitting of only one solution. A problem of government in England and the same problem in Italy may be as wisely handled in one country as in the other, and yet the handling not be identical. There is sure to be some difference, for English racial thought and habit, and even prejudice it may be, will be taken into account in the one case, and Italian in the other. In men's dealings with Indian problems of government in future much more account will have to be taken than in the past of Indian racial thought.

This may seem a strange beginning to a chapter headed "Some Indian Stories." A little patience and I will make the matter clear. I am not going to consider Indian political problems, for they are matters that I can know little or nothing about. My concern is with the extent of the Englishman's knowledge of India. My beginning is



only intended to show how important it must be that any one who can should add to that knowledge. It is not possible, obviously, for any one man to add much: indeed a man might feel that all he could add would be so little, that he might well ask himself if it was worth while his trying anything. That is a question that I think a man should answer in the spirit of Milton, who, when he heard that civil war had broken out, or soon was to break out, in his native land, hurried home from the Continent. He felt that at such a time an Englishman's place was in England. When he got to England, he found that he could do nothing immediately, and, having to live, he opened a school, which brought a celebrated sneer by Dr. Johnson down upon his ghost. I may bring a sneer down upon myself or my ghost by setting out to add to England's knowledge of India by telling some stories. I may risk that. Sneers do not do much harm, either to oneself or to one's ghost.

The knowledge that one has in view is not the knowledge to be gained only by a profound study of the esoteric parts of India's philosophy. That is knowledge that will never be possessed by more than a handful of studious Englishmen. It could never be possessed by mere politicians, and it would not be much use to them, if they did possess it. It is not, then, that knowledge, and neither is it the knowledge that Mr. Edward Thompson was thinking of, when he wrote of Saktism: "About this worship a vast jungle of ritual has grown up, and scholars will probably always be occupied with the effort to disentangle this or that brake of ritual, and to identify its original root." That again is knowledge that the politicians will never possess, nor could they apply it in general practical affairs, if they did possess it. The knowledge they require is a knowledge of the common emotional life of the Indian man or woman. They want to know what things will move them to this or that passion—joy, anger, sorrow, or even such things as mirth, anxiety, fear.

One could not write a formal text-book on such matters. There are few or none of those documents out of which formal text-books are made. Yet any Englishman, not wholly obtuse, who has spent some time in India, will have some notion of how the Indian reacts to worldly, social, and domestic happenings; and it may be that a literary man will have more of a notion. One thing that would help him to gather knowledge is his instinct as a story-teller, which instinct is to be on the watch for anything that has some quality of a story in it; something in it that would enable a story-teller to make a story out of it. He not only has the instinct to watch for such, but having found one, he will remember. He will probably begin by telling the story as an after-dinner story: later he may write it down. In any case his mind will at some time have dwelt on it, and, if he has not had the thought that he had learned something from the story about Indians in general, that will pretty certainly have been the fact. What he has learned, others could learn also—from his stories. That is my belief, at least, and accordingly I have been going through my papers—I might also say my mind—to see how many stories I have collected myself, and what light they throw on Indians in general. Others must judge of that also, if my knowledge is to be communicated. It must be borne in mind, of course, that I cannot here tell all the stories, but only a few. If they give any general impression, then obviously many more such stories would add to and deepen that impression. And now to pass to the stories.

When I worked in the National Bank of India, and was in charge of the Cash Department, there was a counter clerk called Ras Behari Dutt. I noted him as a thoughtful-looking man, and he had besides that heavier build of body, not common among Bengali men, who generally begin with rather girlish figures, and never wholly lose that suggestion. The heavier build was conspicuous in Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, and is seen in Babu

Surendranath Kumar, the Superintendent of the Reading Room of the Imperial Library, a man with a weighted mind. I used to think, to return to Ras Behari, that it would probably be interesting to have his reflections on things in general: but, obeying the unwritten law that confines the intercourse of the Englishmen in business firms and the Bengali clerks strictly to business, and having little or no business to discuss with Ras Behari, I hardly ever spoke to him. However, all that is learned is not learned by speaking: I watched the man, and I suppose I gathered an impression through the pores of my skin.

After I left the bank I felt more at liberty to follow my own impulses; and having had a small book of verse printed to give to my friends, I gave a copy to Ras Behari. He was probably, of all those to whom the book was given, the one who read it most carefully. Here I may say that in the matter of my poetry the sympathy and encouragement of Indians, shown in their talk of the verse as well as in their bearing their share in the cost of printing the books by buying copies, has been at times so great as to be touching. When the mass of my own countrymen was not apparently to be stirred by anything that I could do, there has been an electric wave passing through the Indian society around me. Some of the best criticism reached me in letters from Indians. That is not a thing to pass over, when the search is the character of India.

Ras Behari Dutt, I say, was probably the man who read my book most carefully. He was certainly the only one to write paraphrases of some of the poems, and send them to the author. They formed a document that confirmed the impression that his reflections on things in general would be interesting, or, at least, that they would bear a strongly marked individuality. The quotations from the *Bhagavadgita*, the references to *jivatma*, *paramatma*, and *avidya*, in the notes to the paraphrases—for they were provided with notes—might owe much of

their impressiveness for me to their being so charged with echoes of the unfamiliar East; but the choice of poems to paraphrase and comment on—with one or two exceptions, those of 'saddest thought'—was an index to the man's mind not involved in obscurity. What perhaps made the deepest impression on me was the evidence in the notes of an inability on Ras Behari's part to take my words in their plain sense. Nothing seemed to mean for him what it had meant to me; to my mind the book was an open thing; to him it was a thing full of half-suggestions. I shall never be able to think of an Indian's reading some English book that I have read myself, and taking it to mean the plain thing that it meant to me.

On returning from the Presidency College one afternoon, I found Ras Behari seated, tightly clutching his umbrella, on a stiff seat in the hall. On seeing me enter, he jumped to his feet, saying in a tone of strong excitement, "I have left the National Bank: I will never go back."

"Oh," I said; "what has happened?"

"The *bara* cashier asked me to-day to leave my work at the counter, and post up the cash-book."

"Well, what harm was there in that?"

"There was great harm, sir." He spoke excitedly. "It makes the third time he has done it. He means to give my post at the counter to his nephew. That would be committing an injustice. By leaving the bank I prevent it."

"You don't prevent the nephew getting your post, which is the important thing. You had better go straight back."

"No, sir; never."

"Then you mean to let the *bara* cashier's nephew have your post, without making any attempt to prevent it?"

"I couldn't prevent it, sir, and it would be an act of injustice of which the *bara* cashier would be guilty. By giving up my post, I remove the temptation to which he

is exposed. That is the right thing to do, according to our way of thinking."

"It is a wretchedly illogical way of thinking, if you will excuse my saying so. Don't you see that you don't really give up your post? The *bara* cashier will have deprived you of it, whether he takes it away from you, and gives you another, or whether you resign. And whatever post you hold, your salary will be the same. If you resign, you simply throw away a good post—or a good salary."

"I do not think so, sir. The necessity is that the *bara* cashier should not be exposed to the temptation of committing a sin."

There was silence between us for a time. I felt that I was getting beyond my depth. I was sitting on the stiff seat on which Ras Behari had been seated, when I entered. He was standing in front of me. Whether all that was really what he thought, or whether most of it was a cloak to hide from himself the fact that he had left the bank out of mere soreness of spirit—I did not know any Indian then well enough to be quite sure about that, and I know none of them well enough even now to be sure. I noted that, if much of it was a cloak, there was not a thread in it that an Englishman would have woven: an Englishman, seeking to hide from himself what he was doing, would have put up something very different. That interested me. Presently I spoke again.

"You mean me to understand that when the *bara* cashier this morning—was it this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"When he asked you this morning to leave your work at the counter, you said nothing, but simply came away?"

"Yes, sir. I got my umbrella, and came here."

I was concerned for the man, but I smiled inwardly at the mention of the umbrella. It reminded me of a story that a Calcutta hostess used to tell. She was telling a young Muhammadan, just returned from Constanti-

nople, how sorry she had been to hear that he had fallen into the Bosphorus, and lost his purse. "And my unibrella, too," he said, his eyes opening a little wider.

"Then you have been here for hours?" I said to Ras Behari.

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you come to me?" I hadn't seen him for several years.

"You will help me, sir."

"I see. That's your idea."

Again there was silence for a time, and again I broke it.

"You said a moment ago that you couldn't prevent the *bara* cashier's nephew getting your post. I could easily prevent it. I should only have to speak to Mr. Nicoll. I'll do it."

"No, sir. That would get the *bara* cashier into trouble."

"If it was wrong-doing, it would only be my wrong-doing, and it would lie very lightly on my conscience"

No, sir. It would be mine too. If I had not come and told you, you would know nothing. What I have told you, I have told you in confidence. You couldn't speak to Mr. Nicoll without betraying confidence."

"If that's how you think of it all, I don't see that my speaking to Mr. Nicoll would do much good. You positively forbid my speaking to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good, then—I won't."

There was a little talk of what we must do instead of trying to get him back to his old post in the bank, and then he left. Another page of the book of India had been opened for me to read as much of it as I could. Questions to ask—there were not a few of them. Was all his professed concern lest the *bara* cashier commit a sin really felt? I believed then that it was. Ras Behari I knew as a deeply religious man, as a man, too, not simply following in old religious grooves, but trying to think for himself. I knew that because he had since

given me a pamphlet, entitled "The New Dispensation." He was an adherent of the movement. Another question was: "If he hadn't had me to come to, would he have appealed to Mr. Nicoll or the European in charge of the Cash Department? That is, would he have done so, had he had no scruple about getting the *bara* cashier into trouble?" I knew he would not have done so: he would in that circumstance have fetched his umbrella, and have gone straight home. Let it be forgiven if I insist a little on that. Mr. Nicoll was a kind-hearted man; he would have listened to any Indian member of the staff who thought he had been treated with injustice; but no Indian member of the staff would ever have appealed to him in such a circumstance. An Indian cultivator, or any other of his standing, will go with his petition to the Collector, and, if admitted, clasp his hands, and beginning with "Protector of the poor;" will say his say. An Indian of Ras Behari's class will not speak to any Englishman about a matter deeply personal to himself, unless that Englishman has at least once looked at him in a way to convey: "Brother, we have the same birth; pass through the same life; die the same death. May God be with us," and that, but why no one knows, is a look that seldom passes between Englishman and Indian. Many other looks pass, but not that one.

My next story, far from as valuable a one, is about a man called Kiran Nath Dhar. In a strict sense what I have to say about him is not a story, though it passes into one. He was another of the few Bengalis that I have known who had something of the heavy, bull-like figure of Asutosh Mookerjee. He is dead. I got to know him on becoming librarian, and I immediately recognised that he was far the ablest member of the staff. I believed, too, that he was a strictly honest man. I tried hard to get the vacant head-clerkship for him, vacant because the Head Clerk, not an honest man, had just been dismissed. I failed in that, and very soon afterwards we lost him; for the Keeper of the Records,

that rifling of the safe. More than that: it is a fact that almost all India may have heard of something, when it is a thing, you would say, in no way of interest to any of them. It is one of the unexplained mysteries. An official—he is now the Governor of a Province—told me that he received the earliest official intelligence of an important event. I am not now sure what, but I believe it was the resignation of Lord Curzon. He saw it as his first business to go without a moment's delay to Belvedere, where the Lieutenant-Governor lived, and secure a despatch box that it would now be *safe* for any one who knew its contents to make off with. He had no certainty that any one but the Lieutenant-Governor and he himself knew of the existence of the papers, but he wasn't going to take any risks. So he went post-haste to Belvedere. The despatch box was not there; it had already been stolen.

So Kiran Babu had, of course, heard what had happened at the library.



suggested, or something different; but I never did, or rather I never saw him again.

Having said I would ask no questions, I asked none; but when, on returning from leave, I was told that Durga Charan had fomented a strike, I decided to watch until he should give me a new handle against him. He did, and then I got him sacked. That, I think, was fair enough. I should say that he bears me no grudge, knowing that he got *no more than he deserved*. If he met me in the street, I'd smile to him, and he would grin at me. A smile in India goes a much longer way than most Europeans know.

This will be the best place for one of my notes, seeing that I have just spoken of smiling. In an article by M. Francis de Croisset in the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" was this: "*Sur le quai des gares, je ne me lasse pas de regarder les tout petits. Ils sont nus, avec des crânes tondus, de pauvres visages émaciés que des yeux immenses éclairent d'un feu sombre. Ils ne sourient pas, ils ne savent pas encore, ils ne sauront jamais. A quoi rêvent ces regards puérils qui expriment déjà toute la détresse d'être au monde?*"

That is all wrong. M. de Croisset, however, is not what the Indians would call an unsympathetic man. At the time of that journey he was on his way to Patiala (I think it was Patiala), where he was to be the honoured guest at the celebration of the Maharaja's jubilee. He was a friend of the royal house, members of which he had known in Paris. I gathered from his account that he was the only European in the world invited to certain of the ceremonies. In fact, they treated him as one of themselves. Yet he is all wrong about those boys at the railway stations, and their not knowing how to smile. Any Indian boy will smile to you, any Indian man, if you look at him in a way to invite a smile, and almost any Indian girl too, except those too small. The little naked boys at the stations looked at M. de Croisset out of those sombre eyes, because his own looks

that rifling of the safe. More than that: it is a fact that almost all India may have heard of something, when it is a thing, you would say, in no way of interest to any of them. It is one of the unexplained mysteries. An official—he is now the Governor of a Province—told me that he received the earliest official intelligence of an important event. I am not now sure what, but I believe it was the resignation of Lord Curzon. He saw it as his first business to go without a moment's delay to Belvedere, where the Lieutenant-Governor lived, and secure a despatch box that it would now be *safe* for any one who knew its contents to make off with. He had no certainty that any one but the Lieutenant-Governor and he himself knew of the existence of the papers, but he wasn't going to take any risks. So he went post-haste to Belvedere. The despatch box was not there; it had already been stolen.

So Kiran Babu had, of course, heard what had happened at the library.

"There are two things I could do," I said, "to recover that deposit receipt (I had told him of it). One is to threaten to sack Durga Charan and three or four more of them, if the receipt is not immediately produced . . ."

"That would be no use, sir."

"I agree with you: I might have saved myself the trouble of saying that. The other thing is to ask you, which I now do, to come round, and say to them something like: 'Chapman *sahib* has been a good *sahib* to you; he has always been kind. He wants that receipt you've got out of the safe. It's no use to any of you, because he has stopped payment of it at the bank. It's no use to him either; still he wants it back. If you'll put it somewhere where he'd be sure to find it, he'll say nothing.' You'll do that?"

"Yes." Kiran Babu was a man of very few words.

The day but one after, when they opened the letter-box, the receipt was found in it. I meant to ask Kiran Babu what exactly he had said; whether what I had

suggested, or something different ; but I never did, or rather I never saw him again.

Having said I would ask no questions, I asked none ; but when, on returning from leave, I was told that Durga Charan had fomented a strike, I decided to watch until he should give me a new handle against him. He did, and then I got him sacked. That, I think, was fair enough. I should say that he bears me no grudge, knowing that he got no more than he deserved. If he met me in the street, I'd smile to him, and he would grin at me. A smile in India goes a much longer way than most Europeans know.

This will be the best place for one of my notes, seeing that I have just spoken of smiling. In an article by M. Francis de Croisset in the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*" was this : "*Sur le quai des gares, je ne me lasse pas de regarder les tout petits. Ils sont nus, avec des crânes tondus, de pauvres visages émaciés que des yeux immenses éclairent d'un feu sombre. Ils ne sourient pas, ils ne savent pas encore, ils ne sauront jamais. A quoi rêvent ces regards puérils qui expriment déjà toute la détresse d'être au monde ?*"

That is all wrong. M. de Croisset, however, is not what the Indians would call an unsympathetic man. At the time of that journey he was on his way to Patiala (I think it was Patiala), where he was to be the honoured guest at the celebration of the Maharaja's jubilee. He was a friend of the royal house, members of which he had known in Paris. I gathered from his account that he was the only European in the world invited to certain of the ceremonies. In fact, they treated him as one of themselves. Yet he is all wrong about those boys at the railway stations, and their not knowing how to smile. Any Indian boy will smile to you, any Indian man, if you look at him in a way to invite a smile, and almost any Indian girl too, except those too small. The little naked boys at the stations looked at M. de Croisset out of those sombre eyes, because his own looks

said: "I come from a far country, and what are the like of you to me?" Yet he was humanly interested in them. That is a look that is no use in India. Your look must say: "I come from just round the corner, and you are jolly little naked brats." Half the road between Englishmen and Indians will have been travelled, when Englishmen learn to go about their work in India looking differently. That may sound silly, but it is true. I do not know how Viceroys look at the Indian statesmen that they have to deal with. If I had the choosing of a Viceroy, I'd consider, among other important things, how he would be likely to look at Indians, and I might even consider how he might look more important than anything else.

## XIV

### SOME INDIAN STORIES, II.

**M**Y next story is about a watch, and how it mesmerized a great crowd of Muhammadans. It happened during a time when I was in charge of the Calcutta Madrasah in the absence of the Principal. The Madrasah is a foundation that owes its existence to Warren Hastings, who, I believe, paid for the building very largely, if not entirely, out of his own pocket. There many hundreds of Muhammadan boys, youths, and men study Arabic and Persian, Muhammadan law and traditions, and other branches of Islamic study.

One morning, as I was writing a letter in the Principal's office, word was brought to me that the madrasah (to call boys, youths, and men that for short: a Muhammadan of sixty or seventy, by the way, may be studying at a madrasah alongside of youths) was on strike. I took out my watch, and noted the time, but I don't know why. There is a side door leading into the Madrasah compound. I entered the compound by that door, and locked it behind me. I then advanced to a point midway between the main gate and the entrance to the Madrasah, and there addressing those who were near, I explained that I gave them five minutes in which to go, either to their classrooms, or out into the street. I didn't care which they did, I told them, which was the truth. If they chose to go out into the street, I said, I meant to go out with the last, and would lock the gate behind me.

*The crowd round me grew bigger, of course. I wasn't quite sure how, if they did not go to their classrooms, and refused to leave the compound, I was to get them all out of it single-handed, but time would soon show. I was single-handed. Where, then, was the head maulawi*

and the other teachers? Their faces, when I entered the compound, had been seen peering out of the windows of the classrooms. I could never find words with which to convey the impression that they gave of tearful, utter helplessness.

I had sent word to the head *maulawi* that he and all the other teachers were to sit in their chairs, on their little raised platforms, just as if their classes had assembled, and were quietly at work. I did not quite know what good that would do: I acted on the instinct that not one of the seven or eight hundred persons with whom I was about to deal would have thought of sending that word, had he found himself in my place. It would deepen their impression—at least I believed it was their impression—that a *sahib* is an unfathomable mystery. So, if I must try to work a spell on them, it would be better done, perhaps, unwatched by tearful eyes. If I failed, too, and worked no spell, how much better not to be watched. I remember catching sight of one of the *maulawi's* faces at a window, that is, after I had ordered them all to their chairs, and the sight of it gave me a sudden little anger, the only emotion that I experienced throughout the business, except one of fear of which I shall have soon to speak.

For something to do, while the five minutes that I had given them passed, I started to count them, counting aloud, holding my watch in my left hand as high above my head as I could reach. I think I wanted as many of them as might see the face. 'Four minutes more.' 'Three and a half minutes more.' 'Three minutes more.' 'Two and a half minutes more.' 'Two minutes more.' 'One and a half minute more.' 'One minute more.' 'Half a minute more.'

There rose a sudden cry for two minutes grace, in order that those in the street might be told, and have time to come into the compound. I granted that, and

the counting began again. I was still standing, holding up the watch, where I had planted myself at the beginning. 'Two minutes more.' 'One and a half minute more.' 'One minute more.' 'Half a minute more.' They seemed to find the counting very impressive. Remember, too, that they were not all schoolboys. Some were fully grown youths; others were men with beards. It was the same, apparently, with them all. The counting seemed to fascinate them. With that way in which the mind remembers some details and forgets others not so trivial, I remember some things but not others. I cannot now be sure whether any of them repeated 'One minute more,' and the rest after me. It would be like their kind to have done so.

At the sound of 'Half a minute more,' all faces turned to the Madrasah steps. My first thought was that, whichever way the crowd moved, I must move with it, for I was so pressed against by bodies on all sides. I had even, for the fraction of a second, the fear of being crushed to death. My second thought—or feeling rather, and a very queer sensation it was—was that the crowd was *swaying*. Then we all moved on together in the direction of the classrooms. I moved until I came to a pillar by which I could anchor myself. From there I watched them all streaming up the steps.

When I got back to the Principal's office, I took out my watch, and found that the strike, from beginning to end, had lasted about twenty minutes. It never occurred to me that the seven or eight hundred of them, when the effect of the watch mesmerizing them, or the counting, if it was it that had done it, was exhausted, might see that there had been something illegitimate in the way their strike had ended, and might go out on strike again. That never occurred to me, and apparently it occurred to no one else. A thing I noted with great interest was that the head *maulawi*, so ready at other times to pass

a remark to me about anything that had happened, never said a word about the strike. Not a soul of them ever did. What did they think about it all? I have not the very faintest idea. They are the kind to talk endlessly about anything that has happened during the day: did any of them talk about the strike that night? I don't know, but I imagine not. However, this is to claim to know something of the way in which the Indian mind works, and what European knows anything about that? When you are with an Indian, watching him, or rather, for no watching helps, breathing near him, your subconscious mind may feel what he is going to say or do; but that is not 'knowing,' but an entirely different thing.

My next story is about a man very different from any of the others, Harinath De, my predecessor at the library. He was an astonishing linguist. I once read his formal application for the librarianship. It contained a passage like this: "I can speak, read and write the following languages . . . I can read and write, but cannot speak the following languages . . . I can read, but cannot speak or write, the following languages . . ." After the first came the names of a dozen or more languages—those he could speak, read, and write. After the second came the names of ten or so more—the language he could read and write, but could not speak. After the last came the names of most of the remaining languages. It was all true, too: he was a linguist of the calibre of Sir George Grierson. Mr. William Hornell used to say that, when Harinath wanted to learn another language, he got a dictionary, and having blocked out the words he thought he would never want to use, got the rest by heart, and that he would have the rest by heart before you or I would be word-perfect in the first few pages.

He was an astounding linguist, but he was nothing more. He was almost entirely conscienceless, to begin with. He would drop in at Mr. Hornell's office—they were both good talkers—and after a time, when it was



about a quarter to one, would glance up sideways—he had a heavy head, and did not move it with ease—and say, “I must go: I’ve a lecture at the college at 12 o’clock.” He must have made the very worst librarian that had ever been known. He not only never did any work, but he demoralised most of the staff. He did it, for one thing, by borrowing money from them to buy manuscripts with, or to spend in worse ways, and did not repay it, and they reimbursed themselves by peculation. They had bought two almirahs, the combined cost of which was just over Rs. 200. They drew that amount from the Treasury five separate times. I was struck—I had the investigation of all the melancholy business—by the extreme uncleverness of some of their methods. Thus, the third or fourth time of entering the two sums in the cash-book, having put down the figures once, it struck them that the appearance of that pair of figures so often might arouse some one’s suspicion. So they scraped them out with a knife, and wrote instead two figures that came together to the same total; but those figures, on the top of the scraping, stared out at you far more than the others would have done. I could have said at one time, for they had all been too lazy to destroy papers, who had suffered from venereal disease, and from what kind, and lying about, in the hand-writing of one of these precious knaves, was a long story that I think can never have had its equal in its ingenuity of detail of pornographic filth. That was the worst I ever saw myself of India.

The rules of Government service require that there should be formal charges framed against any holder of a post whom it is wished to dismiss. At the beginning of 1911 two members of the staff were summarily dismissed without that formality; some one in a rage just swept them out. Against Harinath there had to be formal charges framed, a thing that fell to me to do. I was told to send him a copy of the sheet, and tell him that he would be allowed to examine the books and the vouchers. He

replied that he did not wish to be seen at the library, but he would like a talk with me at my house. His saying that he did not want to be seen at the library goes with his writing to tell me that the feelings of his cousin, a subordinate member of the staff, were being lacerated by the talk that was going on about the librarian, talk behind the cousin's back and to his face. Would I see to that? I sent for the cousin, and explained that I could not stop such talking behind his back, but I could ask the others not to talk in his presence, or he could do that himself. Would he? "You have only to say," I said, "Mr. De is my cousin: please don't talk of him before me." "But," the cousin said, his eyes opening wider, "I have no objection to their talking." I then saw that he would have none; that he probably joined in it.

I replied to Harinath that I would be at home to receive him at 6 p.m. on the Wednesday of his appointing, and I waited at home that evening till 6.45, when, there being still no appearance of the man—Indians are never the most punctual of people—I went out for a walk. I met him, however, and turned back with him. Seated with me, he began to talk very rapidly in a voice that I did not recognise as his. What he said was very difficult to follow, too. So, after taking in that he was abusing or exposing the dismissed head clerk, a thing I was competent to do myself, I ceased to listen, and thought of other things. Then he stopped talking, and shifted his place in his chair. Then he began again, this time in his old familiar voice, talk of the things that he had been used to talk of—late Latin plays, and so on. If you quoted a line from any Latin play, he could generally give you the next one. So, at least, I have heard said. Finally he rose, and stood in front of me. Over his large round face there stole something like an illumination, and I thought of the faces of the Buddha that one sees in the museums. Then he said: "Chapman, when all this business is over, I'll tell you what you haven't discovered.

He died before the business was finished; so he never did tell me; but he would have done so. He was that kind of man.

Those are all the stories that I think I will tell. My thought was not that you would learn very much of the character of India from them, but that each would make its small impression, and that, if you held it in your minds, and added to it the impressions drawn from the pictures that have been given from the writings of Indians, and from other pictures, you would have begun to know the Indian. You would be in a better position to study his literature, and to a portion of that, the literature of Bengal, which is the only portion that I know well enough to speak of in public (my knowledge is very slight I must confess: it is as nothing compared with Mr. Thompson's knowledge, for instance), I will now pass.

## XV

### INDIAN LITERATURE, I.

THE greatest treasures of Indian literature are in verse. Moradali and the grandfather who learnt his geography out of the *Meghaduta*, and the boy would say that that was right. They would say that nothing, really, is said in prose; that when a thing is sung, then at last it is expressed. I should not go quite so far, but far enough. If a thing can possibly be said in verse, let it be. A man's best book on the character of India would be poetry. If I thought you could read poetry, I would have tried to write this little book in verse. Just as the Thunder melody, according to Moradali, has been lost—for how many thousand years is it?—so the power to read poetry has been lost. If a thing is said in poetry, that is, in words melodious, and deeply metaphorical, it is invulnerable. If it is said in prose, there is always a loophole through which men may slip. When Milton says:

It was that fatal and perfidious Bark,  
Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine,

there are no questions you can ask. When Arnold says that poetry is a criticism of life, there are many questions for a wise man to ask, and the obvious one—what is a criticism of life?—for even fools to ask. When Arnold writes a paper on De Guérin, full of good things as an egg is full of meat, men ask who De Guérin was, that a man of Arnold's calibre should spend time over him, and so do not read the essay, and Arnold's labour is all lost. (Perhaps you will read it soon? It is worth it). If Arnold had written that he had to say of De Guérin, or even a village sloven, in verse, it would have been read, and, if a great enough poem, again and again. So it is not a

small thing that I can say that India has known to write all that she held greatly important in verse. She did so.

The poetry that I am going to speak of is modern poetry, not the ancient poetry of India. You might say that the ancient Sanskrit poetry could be held to prove nothing as to the character of India to-day, and I should not really know if it would be right to contradict that. I will tell you, then, of modern poetry only. Not of Tagore's, because it is already known in England, and because I do not know it myself as well as I know other Indian poetry. There is something to be learnt of the character of India in every line of the poems that follow; but you must read carefully, and it should be remembered that no poetry was ever really and deeply appreciated by any man until he had read it so many times, that he knew it almost by heart.

Know, too, as important, that Dr. Edward Thompson and Mr. Arthur Spencer, men who have spent long years among up-country Bengalis, and have translated much of the poetry, assure us that the poems that follow are almost all of them well-known throughout Bengal, that village people may be heard singing them out-of-doors. I may wake in the middle of the night, and listen until I fall asleep again to a policeman on guard singing quietly to himself. It will be real poetry that he is singing, such poetry as follows. He is doing what a Hebrew policeman would be doing, if he sang some of the psalms or Solomon's Song. That is not an unimportant point. It goes with the observed character of India. But a man must have been in India, and not insensitive, as too many are, to know what the observed India really is. You must do your best, remembering the courtesy required of you.

This is a very famous song. There is much in it, note, to recall the psalms. The common people sing it. Ramprasad wrote it. He wrote, by the way, all the others that I am to give until I mention another poet's name.

No longer I call you Mother, who have sent  
Me countless ills, and countless others send.

Dear ones I had, a home to me, a friend.  
But you have made of me a mendicant.  
What worse can you, O Long-Tressed Goddess, do?

I must, a beggar, go from door to door.  
But should the mother die,  
Lives not the child? I cry  
Mother, and again I cry,  
But deaf and blind are you

The mother lives, yet the child suffers so—  
What is his mother's use to him? I say;  
'Is this a mother's way—  
To be her own child's foe?  
I muse both night and day  
What I should do, I, when  
You make me to endure  
The pangs of birth again and yet again.'

This is another very famous one, one the common people know and sing. Note the quietly beautiful close. The *nim* (a tree) is noted for bitterness.

'Tis but the hope of hope this coming  
Into the world, and ends in coming.  
The black bees' error, when they fall  
On lotus limned. The *nim* you call  
Sugar, with *nim*-leaves you to feed  
This one, deceiving! In my greed,  
Mother, for sweets my day have I  
With embittered lips and wry  
Spent. You saying: 'Let us play,'  
Have brought me, Mother this earth-way;  
But in the game played me around  
My hope has no fulfilment found.

'What was to be, in the world-play,  
Has been,' suffer Prasad to say.  
'Drawing your child now to your side,  
Go you home at eventide.'

That is the same cry as the cry of the tired and disillusioned man, who would fain be 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'

The next poem is a famous one, too. Read it very slowly; its power comes out better so.

Wherefor so anxious, Mind? Let Kali's name be said.  
 In meditation sit you too  
 From all this pomp of worship pride is bred;  
 Worship in secret, you.  
 What is your gain from metal shapen, earth, or stone?  
 Her image make—no art—  
 Of stuff of mind; on your heart's lotus-throne  
 Set it for aye apart.  
 Parched rice and plantains—to offer them how weak  
 To satisfy your mind!  
 Feed her with nectar of devotion. Wherefor seek  
 With lamp, you blind,  
 And lantern, candle, to illumine her? Oh, light  
 Mind's jewelled lamp;  
 Let it its lustre flash both day and night.  
 Wherefor this earthly tramp  
 Of sheep, goats, buffaloes brought for sacrifice?  
 These words repeat,  
 'Victory to Kali': offer the sixfold vice.  
 Why tomtoms, drums to beat?  
 Clap hands; sing Victory; and lay mind at her Feet.

That is a poem on the foolishness and uselessness of sacrifices and ritual. Miss Mayo, and all her brothers and sisters of the White Race, might learn from it. Certain psalmists asked what was the good of slaughtering bulls and goats, which maketh not man's heart clean. Here is one of the Brown Race asking the same. 'If You yourself are blind,' he asks, 'what is the profit in lighting of lantern, lamp, or candle on altar or elsewhere?' Not a question that can be answered. Seeing how difficult it is for the human mind to hold steadily in it the thought that 'in Him we live and move and have our being'; seeing that, and seeing how difficult it is for a man to live every act of his life in the light of that knowledge, for him to begin to be interested in altar cloths and cups and consecrated bread and wine is for him to withdraw his tired mind into such play as he seeks relaxation in at his theatre; and if he denies it, arguing that cloths, cups, and bread and wine are important, he is a liar, and he lies. That is not worship: that is man-child play. To deny it is to lie. All Europe

and America lies about its ritual. It is not seemly for liars to be heard talking of the weakness and vice of the men of another race. They still sacrifice goats and buffaloes; bring parched rice and plantains; light lamp and candle—being men-children, afraid; but it is not for us to say so. 'Remove first the beam that is in thine own eye. . . .'

The next poem sets forth the manner of the soul's sleep of death. Change the wording here and there, and the poem will set forth your own soul's sleep of death.

Drowsy with longing, you wake not; excellent you have found

Time's bed. From this night of bliss, think you, will be no dawn?

Desire sits in your lap, like to a harlot crowned.

You will not turn from her. The sheet of hope is drawn

Over your body; face muffled, to uncover you refuse;

Winter and summer alike an unwashed cloth you use.

You are held down by the stupor of the wine that you have drunk—

The wine of worldly possession—and you utter not Kali's name;

Not even absent-mindedly. O foolish Prasad, so sunk

In hunger for sleep, that sleep does not appease the same,

In this your sleep the great sleep, the last that comes to all,

Will come, and you will wake not, although we call and call.

There is no asking any questions of that. It is great poetry; melodious and deeply metaphorical.

I have been told that that man Prasad was a poor Post Office clerk, or something no better. If he stood up, looking at us—if we knew all that he thought of us, we should turn ashamed away. Think of it.

Of the next poem a word of explanation must first be said. In Kali's unbound tresses Ramprasad sees a symbol of strength in freedom. The forfeiture spoken of is of life. 'The water of love,' an expression borrowed from their prose translation,\* Dr. Thompson and Mr. Spencer explain as *Bhakti*, that is, passionate, ecstatic devotion.

---

\**Bengali Religious Lyrics. Sakta.* Thompson and Spencer. I commend the book warmly.



Knowest not, Mind, to farm? In the untilled field  
 Would golden harvest wave, so thou hadst sown.  
 Make of her name a fence, that so the yield  
 Be not destroyed. Not Death himself, O Mind,  
 Dare come nigh Kali of the tresses free.  
 When forfeiture will come is all unknown—  
 To-day, or after many a century.  
 Lo, to thy hand the present time, O Mind.  
 Haste thou, and harvest. What they gave to thee,  
 The seed thy teachers gave, scatter it now:  
 With water of love it sprinkle. If alone,  
 O Mind, thou canst not this accomplish, thou  
 Alone, take Ramprasad to be with thee.

Lo, to thy hand the present time!

The next two poems are expression of thought that must for ever, in its dreadness, be strange to us. There is much in the Indian mind that we Westerns cannot hope to understand.

Ever in battle dancing, Mother. Never  
 Beauty like thine, as, with thy flowing hair,  
 Naked, a warrior, on Siva's breast thou dancest;  
 Around thy neck, hung as a garland there,  
 Heads of thy sons, lilled freshly daily;  
 Thy ear-rings little children are.  
 Thy waist adorned with hands; thy lips so lovely;  
 Thy teeth as Kunda flowers in blossom are.  
 Thy face is bright even as the lotus-flower,  
 Its constant smiling terrible. And fleet  
 In beauty as the rain-clouds is thy figure,  
 And stained with blood all over are thy feet.  
 Prasad says: 'As the dancer's is my mind  
 Such beauty to behold my eyes doth blind.'

Come down from Hara's breast, and dance no more,  
 You mad old hag. Siva, not dead, doth live.  
 He, the great saint, is lost in meditation.  
 So strong those feet of yours are that with  
 Your dancing you'll break Bhola's ribs.  
 You know Siva the poison swallowed; so  
 His strength is gone. Mother, come down and do  
 Your dancing, you who are loved by Siva. Who  
 The poison could not kill, why should he die  
 To-day? The poet saith:

'Now he is feigning death,

Just to possess your bloodstained Feet thereby.'

Dr. Thompson has said of the next poem: 'This song is recalled by Rabindranath Tagore in a well-known song in *Gitimalya* (see *Fruit Gathering*, 51); but his translation is only a brief *précis* of the Bengali, omitting the opening lines 'I know this day will pass.' " The cowrie that Ramprasad, the wretched one, must find, is for the ferryman, of course. There are no questions to be asked of this poem either. It is invulnerable. (Not that I mean that my paraphrase is).

This day will pass, this day  
Will pass, and rumour stay.  
Mother, 'gainst Tara's name  
Endless will be the blame.  
By the world's bathing-ghat  
To sell my wares I sat;  
To the world's mart I came.  
The Sun our Lord in flame  
Is set: the ferryman  
Came, and so many ran,  
They fill the boat; behind  
Is left one poor and weak.  
This wretched one—how find  
The cowrie that they seek?

Prasad says: 'Stony-hearted  
Girl, look back. Give me  
A place. Singing to thee,  
Mother, will I, not parted,  
Plunge in the world's great sea.'

Those are all Sakta poems, as the next, which is not one of Ramprasad's, but by Maharaja Ramkrishna of Nator, is also. The poet's thought is that he has been placed in the Ganges to die. On the forepart of his head his doom had been written. The poem should be read aloud, very slowly.

When my mind is failing, then does Kali's name  
Whisper in my ear, as I lie on my sandy bed.  
This body is not mine—by passions it is sped  
Along the flood. Oh, bring, Forgetful One, the same  
Rudraksha berry rosary. Ramkrishna in his dread  
Sayeth: 'Neglectful, thou, of my weal art now to blame;  
Careless of what is writ on the forepart of my head.'

The East is always near to crying, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In all its languages it has cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*. Try, when next you are prompted to utter some harsh judgment of the East, to remember *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*. Has God never forsaken you also?

## XVI

### INDIAN LITERATURE, II.

THOSE are all Sakta lyrics. These that follow are Vaishnava lyrics, or are inspired and influenced by the Vaishnava cult. The Sakta lyrics are patently religious poems: the Vaishnava lyrics are not so openly, but they are equally religious poems to the Indians themselves. Any one who would see that clearly has to open a door that does not open easily to a Western. To him the poems are just love poems. Well, take them as that. You may not learn all you might learn from them of the character of India, but you will learn something.

In the poem that follows the lotus is Radha. The basket of bitter *nim* leaves signifies separation, the bitterest of things. The wild rice that groweth sweet is some girl, Radha's rival. Beautiful similes, both of them. To me a people that will figure separation from the loved-one as a basket of bitter *nim* leaves, and the girl with whom the loved-one is, as wild rice that grows sweet, is an adorable people.

For the fragrant sandal tree—and serving  
It, I thought desire would be fulfilled—  
I mistook him; but *stimul* tree merely,  
Thorny, fragrantless, he proves to be.  
Madhava, though where I dwell he dwelleth,  
Hath become enamoured of another.  
I, a damsel lovely, so accomplished—  
*I have lost my pride and all my beauty.*

Friend, the lotus thrown into the basket,  
Made of bitter *nim* leaves, withereth,  
And the wild rice groweth sweet and blooming.  
It hath chanced my Love this day is coming  
After days spent with her—Oh, so many!—  
But how meet whom now my heart distrusteth?

Of all the Vaishnava lyrics that I know, there is not one that I think more beautiful than that. These two are very charming:

## I.

The night is dark; the sky is overcast.  
 Only the lightnings flash in the sky's ten corners,  
 And down the rain pours, thick and cold and fast;  
 Yet Radha, the darling, now with maidens few,  
 Hasteneth to the grove to meet her Lover;  
 And she is muffled in clinging scarf of blue,  
 Since Love, new-wakened, maketh strong the weak,  
 Radha hath kept the tryst, but not her Lover.  
 Him, therefore, Jnanadasa goeth to seek.

## II.

The night is dark; clouds thunder overhead.  
 How will he come to me,  
 Who wait expectantly,  
 Wistfully seated on my prepared bed?  
 What other thing, O Friend, could there be done?  
 Love brought me all the way,  
 Taught not to fear or stay.  
 — How without sight of him to endure till night is run?  
 My dreams are gone: the lightning scorcheth sore  
 My heart; the thunder roll  
 Re-echoes in my soul.  
 But Jnanadasa saith: 'Your Love is at the door.'

Vidyapati wrote the first poem, and Jnanadasa, the second and third. Narottama Dasa wrote this one:

In my pride I built a palace,  
 And my Lover was to hold me there  
 In his arms, like wine within a chalice,  
 All the night long that the moon made fair.  
 When the cuckoo called with his voice  
 Unto his mate, I clad myself in robes  
 Whose colours were to make my Love rejoice,  
 And so these ornaments and pearly globes.  
 Some one unknown hath lured my Love away:  
 Broken my palace—who could think such sin?

How shall I live the whole night through till day,  
Outside the joy all others pant within?

These betels spiced and camphored—unto whom  
To give them now? and ye, Malati flowers,  
Wreathed to make glad my Lover in this room,  
How shall I breathe throughout the lonely hours?

Why do I not die quickly? Is there still  
Hope in these breasts that only feel their woes?  
'Patience, my Lady; soon you have your will.'  
So saying, Narottama Dasa goes.

It was Chandidas who wrote this:

Oh, love, oh, love—so love is sweet, say men?  
Why is my loving full of venom then?

So no more among talkers will I roam,  
But to my loveliness make love at home.

Being thus calmed, shall I not win the whole—  
So to be reconciled to my own soul?

Saith Chandidas, the twice-born: 'Nay, for your  
Beauty will win him. Oh, but that is sure.'

This is one of Vidyapati's:

Radha with vermilion the sun on her forehead traced,  
And the stars with scented earth, and the moon with sandal paste  
The expectation of finding her Lover that she had,  
At the trysting-place, when the hour came, was making the  
Maiden glad.

In an arrow imitated, and as the arrow fair,  
Like the Love-God's floral dart, the Maiden dressed her hair.

O Madhava, she dressed herself, but with a clever friend  
To help. A look of compassion she knew to send at the end.

She adorned her hair with champaka, and with fresh leaves from  
the bud

Of Ketaki, and her body with powder of musk she rubbed.

Cleverly thus by the sign of the leaves and by the sign of the  
flower\*

The Maiden indicated when she wished the trysting hour.

---

\*They are associated with night.

Says Vidypati: 'Hear me, O unclouded spirit, bright,  
As Rupanarayan knoweth, comes the darkling, new-moon night.

Let me pass now to the work of the late Mr. C. R. Das, or Chittaranjan Das, as I prefer to call him. It is as wrong for a man whose name is Chittaranjan Das to let himself be called Mr. Das, as it would have been for Marcus Tullius Cicero to let himself be called Mr. Cicero. It does not sound well, does it?

Mr. R. C. Bonnerjee, a well-known figure in Calcutta, a man whose hobby is the reviewing of books (that is another scrap on the subject of the character of India ; there might so easily be no Indian whose hobby was the reviewing of English books), had this one day in a review of a book containing some translations of Indian poems, some of them being poems by Chittaranjan: 'The writer of this review once had the privilege of submitting a translation of *Sagar Sangit* or *Songs of the Sea* to the Rt. Hon. Herbert Fisher, who was much impressed—so he said—by the depth of their poetic feeling.' The paraphrases that follow first are not of that poem-cycle, but of other poems of Chittaranjan. This is one of them, it is called *A Prayer*:

Thou art the life of the Universe; to me  
The light of day art, and the dark of night;  
Activity's field, when I do wake and see;  
In sleep, my dream Oh, Life of Life, the light  
Thou art to me of day, the dark of night.

Relieve me of my vice and virtue; make  
My heart void, and this heart, made empty, fill  
With thy entirety. Thy excelling take  
And make me great with it Enfold me still  
Within thee: cover me, Protector bright,  
My light of day who art, and dark of night.

This one is called *You and I*:

This my love, coming from my heart, doth play  
Daily in your beauty At the close  
Of the pleasure-fatigue my eyes, so eager-bright,  
Are lulled in your sweet bosom to repose.

My desire, dear Maid, asks but to be consumed  
 By day and night, and drops upon your frame,  
 Upon the whole it drops ever and anon,  
 Mad with the longing to satisfy its flame.  
 My mind, dear Friend, like poet in frenzy held,  
 Composes a hundred songs, and together strands  
 The choicest flowers of pleasure and of pain,  
 Down at your feet to pour them with his hands.  
 You and I are so near, yet do we keep  
 Afar, placing a light to blaze between.

One is struck by the frequency of references to song in Chittaranjan's poetry, and of similes drawn from song-writing; and there are poems the subject of which is singing. Indeed it emerges that, in his mind, singing and living are one; song is life and life is song. The next poem is entitled *Song*, and another one begins:.

What shall I sing, what quivering song of despair?  
 So many songs in my heart, but so many mistakes  
 Committed again and again—

that is, in living, not in singing. If man lived as he should, was the thought, he would sing as he should; the imperfection of song is the imperfection of life—a thought I have had myself. But now for *Song*:

The songs that swell in my breast and fill my soul, from thee  
 Their life get, thou majestic, eternal; thou great sea  
 Of life, as a ripple is in the surging billows, such  
 Am I. With thy spirit float me; in the transport of thy touch  
 Immerse me. In thy song let petty songs be stilled.  
 Touch me, and be my soul with song eternal filled.

'In thy song'—then the divine life is song too. Divine life is eternal song. A thought!

This is a fine one:

#### THE DAWN.

When, beautiful Dawn, dream-held, did you arise?  
 By the side of night, dream-lulled, you lay.  
 In golden apparel when did you robe the skies,  
 And tint heaven with the delicate flush of day?  
 Black night enveloped you, but you have bound  
 Her tresses dark, O Maid, with loving care.



Smiles on your lips play; in your lotus-eyes—  
 Pure, innocent bliss is there.  
 With nimble feet you have come anear, and crowned  
 My head, touching my eyes with scented hair.  
 Now at your lips I am gazing with surprise.  
 Of ruddy delight they are full. The end of night  
 Has come; I touch the apron of the bright;  
 My heart, late sleep-benumbed, fills with delight.

The end of that is the best—'I touch the apron of the bright.'

There is a strange poem, called *Misery*. Which of us ever thought of misery as an eternal fay? It is Eastern thought—to call misery a fay—of that kind that one doubts the West ever understanding. This is the poem:

I know thee, Misery A wondrous fairy, you keep me  
 From life's sweets ever You pluck away  
 From the living the myriad life-flowers. In guise of kissing  
 Blood to drink! So make death within me play  
 At every breath. Hold me in death's embracing:  
 With thy flowing tresses darken all the way.  
 The whole of thy life is a mysterious dalliance,  
 Playful thou art by night, playful by day.  
 I've art drinking, thou maiden, oh, thou thirsty.  
 Thou who my hope, my fear, love, bliss art aye.  
 Thy kiss within me is burning ever,  
 Thou my beloved—oh, thou eternal fay.

I thought I would keep the best of the short lyrics to the end. This one:

#### A DREAM.

The sombre night, dreadfully dreary, like wordless  
 Eternity's mystery. I woke from sleep,  
 And opened my eyes. The world, internal, external  
 Was wrapped in darkness deep.

All of a sudden emerged, in the midst of darkness,  
 The ideal figure of my heart;  
 The lips of beauty beaming brightly, peerless,  
 Clear in the white moon-part;  
 The eyes seen as the evening lamp before  
 The image within from without the twilight door.

My heart-door open, I sought me amidst thy song so sweet,  
And songs I have made of this union, a few to lay at thy feet.

## 8

Living thy song all the livelong day,  
I am become in thy hand a horn  
On me, the instrument, Musician, play,  
Me filled with darkness, filled with light of morn;  
Play on this lonely shore, 'neath this lone sky,  
In the expectant air, darkness surrounded by.

In the land of illusion, dawn young in the shadow-land,  
Desireless, passionless One, at eve play with thy hand,  
O Musician, on me. Play on the instrument made:  
Play this thy light unique; play this thy shade.

## 9

What play on me, taking my life, hast played!  
How thou hast opened my mind's eye.  
My life, unfolded petals in the shade,  
How opened now thy singing by.

My life has blossomed even as a flower,  
Life in strange light, expectant, scented, free.  
All life is eternal song this hour,  
Daytime and night, thy singing in, O sea.

## 10

Ranging itself in this unique song-space,  
Goes the heart, song-expectant, like a bird.  
Finding in Time no end, no end in Space,  
I fly about, the song eternal heard;  
Silence, the shoreless, with sound eternal filled—  
This song of roaring strange is strangely stilled.

I in song-universe eternal drowned,  
In Time no bottom, in Space no bottom found.  
Immeasurable sphere of song unrolled,  
Sound—in what sound, what silence, do I unfold?

I have said elsewhere that the Indians "are not just like us, but profoundly unlike us." What I have just given of Chittaranjan's *Sagar Sangit*, where I understand it is not the sea of shores and tides that is in question, but the sea of stars and planets and tides of ether, and life in man, beast, bird, flower, shows how different are

their thoughts of things from ours. That is an Indian's morning meditation on some day of sunshine. It is steeped in an emotion that is not as ours.

Even a very little thing—while I am speaking of their difference—may show how different they are from us. Mr. G. C. Bose, whom I have once mentioned, said to me one day: "One of my young friends asked me what So-and-so's qualifications are for his post. I replied:

- (1) he's a gentleman;
- (2) he's well read;
- (3) there's no side about him;
- (4) he mixes freely with all of us,

and the young man departed satisfied." In that answer there is hardly a word that could have come from a European.

Or take this, a letter that came to me one day from an Indian I have long known. To explain first that the Bijoy mentioned is, the first time, the chief character in a story that my friend has written, and the second time, the book.

My dear Old Friend,

The 28th of the last month was my 50th birthday: I thought of you and felt you were near me even if you were not in the house. For half a century, my soul has bivouacked on my life, watched my joys and sorrows, disappointments and achievements (very little indeed). My desires and selfishness, unconquered temptations, selfishness, pride and conceit have challenged and fought against my soul. The defence, fighting weapons, their use and application and, ah, the final conquest! How subtle and mysterious are these. Still, it is Life, its consummating joy, unadulterated with anything that is mean and unworthy. Bijoy had his nirvana in these. His soul conquered everything which linked his soul to this world. He died, but what was his death? a transcendental joy which meant a consummation of the communion which his soul had with the Universal Soul. He had no children to see, but as he was dying he felt

that his wife bore his spirit in the shape of an unborn child. The to-be widow unconsciously felt that in her great bereavement and Hindu renunciation of this world, she was gaining something which was heavenly. The lonely conversation with her husband on these, vague and undefined, yet full of hidden meaning and significance. 'These thoughts may take shape in Bijoy.'

(There is room, if he would just step up with it, for that American's *constructive criticism* of India, so that she may cease to be—what did the snuffling man say she is? the religious, moral, and physical plague-centre?)

A word to Bengal about Chittaranjan's poetry. I have never had clear proof that I am not the only man besides Mr. R. C. Bonnerjee who hitherto has recognised its value, and it has often come up that men, and men who had looked on Chittaranjan's face, which I never once did, had never heard that he had written poetry. I cannot even count Aurobindo Ghose's having translated the *Sagar Sangit* as a proof that he recognised its importance; for I was told that Chittaranjan himself asked Aurobindo to do the work; that Aurobindo delayed and delayed (Bengalis are too much given to such delaying: they should look into that) until Chittaranjan one day telegraphed to ask whether he was going to do it, or was never going to do it, whereupon Aurobindo sat down and wrote his translation in a long spasm. So he cannot with certainty be counted. It is, I need hardly say, far more important for the Bengalis to be quick to recognise the importance of any new Bengali poetry than that they should be quick to do that of some Englishman's poetry.

## XVII

### THE READING OF THE COMMON PEOPLE

A SUBJECT about which I believe little has been written, though it is of considerable interest, is the reading of the common people in India. Their reading is of two kinds, one without books and one with them. For a man may read without a book, be it Homeric bymus, or the poems of Hesiod, or Virgil, or Dante, or the songs of Ramprasad Sen. The last are often heard in Bengal: it may be from the lips of a man alone in a rice field, as Wordsworth's reaper was alone in her field; or it may be from the lips of a man seated on the top of a load of bricks in a bullock cart going along a Calcutta road. The written or printed book is not the essential thing, but the words sung or written once, and held of such value among men that the texts have been preserved. *They* are all that are needful, and someone to recite them, or even just to tell other men what he has learned from the book—it might be the worthlessness of devitalised rice as food—which fact about reading is a thing that one could wish governing persons, those who tax us, and spend the money, would remember. When a Viceroy, say, thinks of the millions of men and women in India as those who cannot read, it is the fact that they cannot; when he thinks of them as never having read, or been read to, which is the same thing, that is not the fact. Too much, nay but far too much, is expected as the benefit of teaching the masses of India to read, and it would have to be done at their expense. It is assumed,—but on what grounds?—that they would read and gather useful information. What proof is there that they would? Suppose that they merely read this or that translation of "The Mysteries of the Court of Saint James," by Reynolds, which is a book again and again translated, I notice, into an Indian vernacular; a

a *darwan* or a bearer reading, I would get down from my bicycle, and look over his shoulder. Then I'd bicycle to round a corner, and there make a note of the book. Or I would enquire in a house. Once, being with Mr. Hobbs, a well-known Calcutta man, I said, "Do you mind if I ask your bearer a question?" "Ask him as many as you like." So I asked the man if, should he possess a book, he would bring and show it me? He brought me the *Ramayana* in Oriya script. I told Mr. Hobbs what it was; also what the *Ramayana* is. "Do you mean to tell me," said he, "that all these years that man has been reading an epic poem? I can't read an epic poem." "Yes," I replied; "he has been reading the *Ramayana* all these years, and what is more, you'd find that your *darwan* has another copy, only the script of his will be *devanagri*."

The book was generally the *Ramayana*, but it was not always so. Of other books that I noted that month were the *Mahabharata*, the other great Indian epic, *Danlila*, *Jaimini Bharat*, *Galpa-Guchcha*, *Premashram*, *Bharat-varsher Itihas*, and *Lalchand*. *Danlila* is a poem on the subject of the giving of milk and butter to the Lord Krishna by the milkmaids of Mathura. It was being read from a book—an Indian, when he reads from a book, will ordinarily be reading aloud, and there is likely to be a swaying of his body to the rhythm of the poem. *Danlila*, the time I heard it read, was being read by a *paharawalla* in the middle of the night. He was keeping watch over the Public Building where I live. I lay awake listening to that *paharawalla*, thinking that his reading the kind of thing that I supposed he was reading—I did not see the book until morning—was as if a policeman on night duty at the House of Commons should be heard reciting passages from the Song of Solomon. *Galpa-Guchcha* (the lift-man was reading it) is one of Rabindranath Tagore's collections of stories. *Premashram* (The Hermitage of Love) is a novel in Bengali. A car driver was reading it. A *dakwalla* was reading *Bharatvarsher Itihas* (History of India)—(as I write this, the sound of a man reciting to himself comes

from near-by) while he sat waiting for a man to come to the office, a man to whom he had a money order to pay. *Lalchand*, a play in Bengali by one Ali (I forget the rest of the name), was being read by a billiard-marker off duty. More than once, when the book was the *Ramayana*, the man, likely enough a *darwan*, was reading aloud to a number of men grouped around him.

In the villages, where there is much more illiteracy than in the towns, the "reading" of the common people is much more the passing through the mind of the sense of remembered texts, as I might go over a sonnet of Shakespeare or a poem of Browning in my head, while marching in the hills; "reading," that to my thinking is a better kind than what is commonly accepted as the only kind. The place of the "reading," in small town or village, is frequently the *modi dukan*, where the folk come to buy their supplies of rice (that devitalised stuff), dhal, sugar, oil, etc., and where the *dukanwala*, to increase his custom, or to prevent his rival attracting away his business, will provide the entertainment of reading. He reads to his customers himself, or he has an assistant who does that: he may not be able to read himself. The thing read is almost always some portion of the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*.

Another feature of village intellectual life is the *katha-katha*, or reciting, which is done by the *kathak*, the reciter by profession. The reciting is usually done in the *chandimandip*, which is generally a temporary, thatched structure, where also marriages are celebrated, when they are not celebrated in private houses. The *kathak* sits on a dais in the centre of the *chandimandip*. The listeners sit around him, the Brahmins nearest to the *kathak*, and the rest, in order of caste, more removed. The *kathak*, who is a reciter by profession, as I have said, receives gifts of money, or is paid in kind. A *kathak* may attain high eminence, as did one at Bansberia, by name *Sridhar Kathak*. He died more than fifty years ago, and had a successor; but he too died, and now there is no *kathak* in Bansberia.

upon his listeners appears to have something of the spell, akin to divine madness, spoken of by Plato." Happy poets in such a country. In my own country—well, God forgive us all.

Never having lived in the South of India, I have no knowledge of my own of the ways of reciters there; but my friend, Kadayam Gopal Sankar, has written a note—or a chapter even, it is so long—on the reading of the people in the South. I cannot give it all here, but perhaps in some third edition of this book. I will give what I can here, and would draw special attention to what he says of the women of his own home. That would have done for a quotation in the chapter on the women. I would draw the attention particularly of Mr. Thompson to it, as I see that he has been saying in the "Nation & Athenæum" that "India has never given her women a chance." I imagine that, if you were absolutely honest and fair, you would have to own that India has given her women just as much a chance as ever England did. It is so easy to say a thing, but Goethe said, "The instant we begin to speak, we are more or less wrong." Some one said that you cannot bring an indictment against a whole nation. That is a thing too often forgotten. We have forgotten so much; so you have men saying what a Frenchman said the other day, "C'est pourquoi, en 1927, le monde est triste: il a oublié ses vieilles lois qui l'aidaient à vivre." "The *spirit* of the Gospel is the sole cure." It was Coleridge said that—the spirit of the Gospel, not Miss Mayo's or that American man's. But to give Mr. Sankar's note.

## THE READING OF THE COMMON PEOPLE IN SOUTHERN INDIA.

By KADAYAM GOPAL SANKAR.

. . . Leaving out the *élite*, the Malayalis fall into two classes:—(1) the literate, meaning those who know the three R's, and (2) the illiterate. The literate class has two



kinds of reading :—(1) traditional, which they share with the illiterate, and (2) modern, which is confined to the rudimentary modern Malayalam literature, covering poetry, sentimental and sensational fiction, journalism, and religion. The traditional reading is of three kinds :—(1) epic and puranic literature in translation and in adaptations in the form of poetry, prose stories and dramas ; (2) *kudiyattam*, or dramas acted on the stage, and (3) *pathakam*, or humorous recitations. The most distinguished modern Malayali poet is Vallattol Narayana Menon. The most popular traditional epic is the *Romayano* of Ezhuttaccan. The *kudiyattom* and *pathakam* are both performed only in temple-halls and on religious occasions by members of a hereditary caste, *sakhyor*. In performing the *kudiyattam*, several persons, representing the various characters, take part. Two are indispensable :—(1) the *vidushako*, the buffoon, who is dressed like a clown, and recites *slokas* with comic Malayalam renderings, and dances fantastically ; (2) *nongoiyar*, a woman netress. The stage, as everywhere else in South India, is a very simple affair, a wooden platform with a screen behind, painted with puranic scenes. There are no speeches, but the action is carried on by means of the *slokas* and gesticulation, to the invariable accompaniment of a crude copper drum. The performance must always be made before a lighted bell-metal lamp, it representing Agni, the god of fire. The only decorations of the stage are the *kulavazhai*, fruit-bearing plantain posts, and the *kuruttolai*, coconut-leaf arches. The time is usually night, and the performances generally last all night. The audience will comprise practically the entire village, and not only are the halls packed to their utmost capacity, but the audience generally overflows to all accessible places within hearing of the stage, sometimes extending to the street.

The *pathakams* are humorous recitations of epic and puranic stories, and the lives of Rama, Krishna, and the Pandavas are most popular. The *sakhyar* take advantage of these occasions to introduce *upakatha*, or anecdotes in

the *Mahabharata* are the original sources of most of the reading of the people throughout India, northern as well as southern, and that they influence, even to-day, the daily lives of the Hindus to an extent that no book, not even the Holy Bible, does the lives of any other people. The Kingdom of God will have been brought down to earth on the day when the Bible influences the daily lives of Christians to the *same extent*.

(I think so, Mr. Sankar.)

## XVIII

### 'HINDUISM IS SELF-CONDEMNED'

S AID a reader of Miss Mayo's book, 'Hinduism, by tolerating such iniquities, and even enjoining some of them, is self-condemned.' 'Whose Hinduism?' one might have asked; 'Ramprasad's, the Hinduism of the man with the *rishi*-like smile and *pūja* in his heart, or some other's?' Quite a fair question. One would think it absurd to say, because a man with syphilis had been admitted to hospital, and had died there, and he a so-called Christian, that Christianity tolerated that, and so was self-condemned. If Christianity was what Christians throughout the centuries have practised, one would be sorry to be it. So of Hinduism. if it was what some Hindus have practised, and others to this day are practising, one would be sorry to be it. But it is as much what the purest-souled Hindu is practising, a Chaitanya, than it is the superstition of this or that brutal creature; or rather it is more the former. There is, in a strict enough sense, no such thing as a Hinduism tolerating this and enjoining that. There have been Hindus, and they were what they were; there are Hindus, and they are what they are.

If a pagan wanted to know what Christianity was, one would ask him to read the New Testament. So, if a Christian wants to know what Hinduism is, one would ask him to read the books. If he did, and if afterwards he mixed with all sorts and conditions of men, he would see that among Hindus there is a great deal of degradation, superstition, and so on, but he would know that they were tares growing among the wheat. He would remember other tares that he had seen. If he was utterly strict with himself, he would not confound even bad practices in a Hindu temple, if he found any such, with the

Hinduism of which he had read. He would not do that any more than he would have confounded the practices of licentious monks of times past (have there not been such?) with the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Hinduism would always be for him the doctrine of the *Bhagavadgita*, Chaitanya, and the saints of Hinduism. 'The only Christian life that I can think of as Christian,' a man might say, 'is the life of such a one as Saint Francis.' So another might say, 'The only Hindu life that I can think of as Hindu is the life of such a one as Ramprasad.'

Mr. Stanley Jones, in the Introduction to "Christ at the Round Table", has :

My impulse has been . . . to write of general impressions. But I have felt this would be unfair, particularly to Hinduism. So much stress has been laid in the West on the lower phases of Hinduism that the impression that the ordinary man of the West holds is that it is made up of caste, child widows, and so on. He thinks of religion as centred in the temple. So if I spoke of Hinduism in this book, I would be interpreted as meaning temple Hinduism. The fact is that the Hinduism of educated India does not centre in the temple but in the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The possible exception to this is South India, where temple Hinduism has a stronger hold. Even here the Saiva Siddhanta, centring in the poems of the Tamil Saints, holds the hearts of the educated rather than does the temple. You might wipe out the Hinduism centring in the temple, along with caste and corrupt social customs, and this Hinduism centring in the Upanishads would live on, perhaps with greater power.

What is Hinduism? As a philosophy, a thing of the intellect, it is beyond my present powers of enquiry: as a mythology, the study of it would throw light on the character of ancient rather than of present-day India. It is as an emotional thing that its study is profitable—profitable, that is, to an enquirer whose aim is such as mine, that aim being to aid in the practical comprehension of these yoke-fellows of ours. As an emotional, personal thing, it is worth study. I have tried to study that aspect: I have come to the conclusion that, if I was ever to get

very deep, I should have to kneel down and pray in their temples, worship with them, which cannot be done. I should perhaps then *feel* how they feel, a thing it baffles me to think out. I come upon such things as this—it is in one of the portions of Mr. Sankar's chapter on the reading of the South Indian peoples—

In fact, Rama and Krishna are the beloved Gods of the Hindus. The former prevails in North India, but, among the Tamils, the Boy-God, Kanna (from Prakrit Kanha—Sanskrit Krishna) is more popular. The devotees of Krishna, including myself, regard him as the only *complete* incarnation of God, while all the other Gods and Saints throughout the world, including in these days Jesus, and form of old Buddha, are deemed to have been born of his *amsa* (spirit, the Holy Ghost of the Christians). 'Krishna' literally means 'one who attracts' (all souls to himself).

It is intelligible to me that an Indian should regard Krishna as the only complete incarnation of God, more complete than Jesus was for instance, but what is unintelligible to me is that any one should want there ever to have been an incarnation of God, in the sense in which Mr. Sankar is using those words ; whether Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Rama, or any other ; and any one who does, appears to me to be still dwelling in man's state of emotional childhood. Something holds me back from thinking of Mr. Sankar as still dwelling in man's state of emotional childhood ; of thinking of him as so dwelling with other Hindus whom I have had under observation. I can think of myself, for all that I no longer desire that there should ever have been an incarnation of God (in that sense), as emotionally a child, because, to tell the plain truth, I know I am one ; but something holds me back from thinking of these Hindus so.

Take these notes, extracted from a correspondence that I had once with a very fine Indian scholar :—

Schelling remarked, "One does not see why the sense for philosophy should be more generally diffused than the sense for poetry." Keyserling, after a prolonged study of the religious

is that mirror. "A drug-eating vagabond, a haunter of waste places where dead man's bones lie." "He spreads his tiger-skin by the door, he sits and calls." An Indian's sorrow is that the Siva in Man is too often obscured by a restless preoccupation with direct activity. Those who best promote life do not have life for their purpose. [Is that something like our Christian belief, that to gain life one must lose it?] We are like Saul, who went forth to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom. I am so thankful that you propose to confront Siva and Krishna in the same volume \*

Another letter, with a typescript, the page references being to it. The passages quoted will be found in "Religious Lyrics of Bengal," if any one is so curious.

About the Eastern conception of *Morals as Art* as opposed to *Morals and Art*: I was thinking of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*: "Alles Leben ist Streit um Geschmack und Schmecken" (All life is a dispute about taste and tasting).

In the East, the æsthetic sense and *Morals* are moulded into a single complex called *Life*. Religion is regarded as a private matter, as Love is. Proselytising is never encouraged. Religious instruction is imparted only at home, and through books. One is made to feel that *Morals* are a very vital and personal matter. The world and the fashion of it come in only as the background of an impersonal treatment of personal problems. Hence all life becomes an Art. Let us illustrate.

Look at a Chinaman. I am passionately fond of his literature. It is full of ceremony. But what is ceremony but the play of Art in the *Morals of Life*? A Chinaman will enquire of what blessed and noble country you are: you return the question, and he will say his lowly and humble province is so and so. He will invite you to have the condescension to do him the honour of directing your revered and jewelled feet to his low and degraded house. You reply that you, a despicable and discredited worm,—etc. Can you imagine a finer transubstantiation of *Morals* in the so-called serious Art of Life? An unsympathetic resident has observed, "A Chinese thinks in theatrical terms." He has not read, nor felt the Confucian Li-ki that life in China is regulated by music and ceremony. An Indian does both, in his literature [*he has both*].

Now, look at the other picture. The Hebrew conception of *Morality*, and Moses' visit to Smai. Against the Chinese and

---

\*This is more than I really understand. It shows again how far away their thought is from ours.

gathered an impression, whence a feeling of friendliness towards them ; so that I'd rather be with them than with you. I have breathed in the air their shrinking from your plain-mindedness. (It came as a great relief to me, after I had been but a short time in India, that I was among a people who would never speak of Welsh Disestablishment).

The extracts last given are from a letter that came in answer to one of my own, and from my letter I may quote this, which done we shall be at the end :

Jesus said : "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They toil not neither do they spin." But Jesus was thinking of the minds of his poor hearers, and how full they were of care for the morrow. They were to draw a practical lesson from the growing of the lilies. There is a deeper contemplation (is this your point?) of the lilies of the earth and the heavens and the human soul, and birth and death and change and destruction and the lilies thereof.

T H E E N D